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THE  
PRINCESS OF THE MOOR

[DAS HAIDEPRINZESSCHEN.]

BY  
E. MARLITT.

*Authorized Edition.*

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

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## THE PRINCESS OF THE MOOR.

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### XX.

WITH rapid steps we hastened through the garden; my father was soon utterly unconscious that a nervous little maiden was tripping by his side, and skipping along on her tiptoes like a flake of snow. He talked to the strange gentleman without intermission, and to my great annoyance in the same unintelligible language which the professor in the Haide had used.

We heard Helldorf's glorious voice as we passed through the yard; he was singing alone. My father suspended his rapid pace for one moment in surprise. So far I had never sought to make further researches in the yard, it was too bare and empty for my taste; but now that we were crossing to go out by the great gate, I had a complete view of the ground floor belonging to the front house. Four windows, running parallel with one another, were each partially open, and a perfect flock of young

girls were sitting within. The wainscoating was very low, and enabled one to see the busy nimble fingers at work; at the window nearest me, a young girl held up a myrtle wreath, to try how it looked before adding the next sprig.

And so then, that was the "back-room," about which Charlotte had given me such a fright the very day after my arrival. It did not appear to me either dark or forbidding; there was plenty of air and light, and the girls were remarkably clean and well-dressed. All these young heads, dark and fair, were listening to the singing, not a lip moved; . . . when all at once I saw a sudden thrill of terror run through the whole party, and every head bent low over their work; the girl with the myrtle wreath pushed the window to with her elbow, unobserved, and turned her flushed face towards the inner part of the room. . . . A door banged violently within, and immediately after the old bookkeeper's voice was heard scolding.

"What a draught," he exclaimed, his sonorous voice echoing the louder through the yard because the singing had for a moment ceased; "ah, I see, the windows have been opened to listen to the illusive voice of Satan, and thus indulge in idleness! . . . Ye foolish virgins! 'It is better to listen to the reproof of the wise, than to the song of fools.'"

While he gave utterance to this sentence he banged the windows to, and shook them to make sure that none of that earthly sound could penetrate. He saw us passing by; but he took no notice whatever, and retained his haughty demeanour.

My father laughed ironically.

"There is another regular Pope," he said to the stranger. "One of those narrow-minded individuals, which a strong reaction of the times has produced—the next generation will doubtless look back with scorn on these spots on the sun of our day."

How I pitied the poor young things in the back-room! Their wings had been cruelly cut too, and not a trace of the "savage element" now remained; on the contrary they were prisoners against their will. Meekly they bowed their heads, and submitted to be deprived even of the fresh air because forbidden sounds had reached their ears. . . . And it was the horrid daily singer himself who had the task of clipping their wings, and watching them. . . . Oh, Herr Claudius, you shall find more trouble at my hands yet. . . . I could have run away like a hare, and if no sheltering roof were to be found about here, one fine morning I would just return whence I had come. . . . Not indeed to the Dierkhof where Ilse would scold me, but to the little mud cabin

with the bottle-green windows —there would I share Heinz's buck-wheat meal, and fly all day long over the Haide with unshorn pinions! . . .

We had left the house in the Mauerstrasse behind, and were now treading the ugly, dusty streets, which I had never wished to see again; still, they no longer seemed so bad since the burning noon-day sun was not shining on them. Much else had changed too; I no longer met glances of ridicule. Women passed, who looked kindly at me, and who peeped enquiringly under my hat, as though they really wished to see what kind of face the tripping little lassie in holiday attire had. . . . One thing however produced a great and peculiar effect on me, and caused me to hold my head at least several inches higher, and that was, the manner in which my father was greeted. The man himself as he hastily passed along, with the careless attitude and dreadfully wild-looking hair was anything but an imposing object, and yet officers and elegantly dressed gentlemen bowed low before him with the deepest respect; and distinguished ladies, driving in magnificent carriages, nodded their heads to him and smiled, as though he were their most familiar friend. . . . This profound respect was all directed to this widely celebrated man whose head was the receptacle of such wondrous stores of knowledge. Every one

bent before him, with one exception . . . the merchant in the Mauerstrasse . . . he, forsooth, knew everything better! . . .

In no genial humour did I think upon that scene before the medallion cabinet; and what annoyed me most was the impression I had myself received on that occasion. . . . The man had stood there, as if really endowed with superior power, as though his every word rested on as solid a foundation as his own old business, and . . . worst of all . . . the brilliant young officer, in all his elegance and manly beauty, had been a moment completely thrown into the shade beside that man in the simple black coat. . . . What a metamorphosis! That was the “quiet old gentleman,” who had appeared so utterly insignificant in my eyes on the top of the Hun-tombs —on whom I had scarcely even deigned to look! . . .

We had to walk a considerable distance before we reached the Ducal Castle. A footman preceded us, to announce our arrival, and while the seller of the medals waited in an ante-room, my father led me through the salons. Once again he ran his fingers through his hair, then pushed me gently through the door, which the footman threw open.

The dreaded moment then had arrived, against which the untutored Haide child had with well-grounded instinct fought with all her might. . . . My

*début* was indeed pitiable. Charlotte had shewn me the way I ought to bow; but alas! Spitz made a far better hand of the little tricks which Heinz had taught him. My "quicksilver soles" felt riveted to the spot where my father had left me standing. I saw nothing beneath my down-cast eyelids, save one small square at my feet; and I heard nothing but the rustling of silken garments, saying to myself, the while that rising tears of vexation rose and were swallowed down again, that I was like nothing . . . standing there so awkward and simple . . . but a coarsely hewn out statue. . . . Suddenly the lovely tones of a soft bell-like voice fell on my ear,—the Princess was saluting my father,—and a moment afterwards, a hand touched my chin, and raised my drooping head. I looked up then, and no sparkling coronet dazzled my frightened eyes. . . . I saw wonderful thick brown curls shading a face of rosy hue, and a pair of bright eyes, as blue as those of my favourite butterflies in the Haide, smiled down upon me. I knew that the Princess was no longer young; she was the reigning Duke's aunt, and a contemporary of my mother's; I thought, consequently, that this tall slight figure, with the velvet complexion and soft youthful profile, could not be the Princess Margarethe. My father informed me otherwise.

"Your Highness sees now," he said, while a

suppressed laugh trembled in his voice, "how right I was in begging for unlimited forbearance; my shy daišy hangs her head helplessly. . . ."

"We will soon alter all that," replied the Princess smiling; "I know how to deal with nervous, timid little maidens such as she is. . . . Go now, dear Doctor, the Duke is expecting you. Auf Wiedersehen at tea."\*

My father left the room, and I now stood there left to myself in the insidious atmosphere of the Court, in its dangerous precincts. I saw now that the Princess was not alone; a few steps behind her stood a pretty young girl; the Princess presented us to each other, and I learned from that that she was a maid of honour, and that her name was Constance von Wildenspring. Before I had time even to think of it, the young lady's nimble fingers had dexterously divested me of my hat and mantilla, and I was placed opposite the Princess, while the young lady sat a little distance off, behind one of the window-curtains, working.

How admirably the Princess understood the art of untying the bann of timidity which separated the "shy little maiden" from her. She related how often my mother and she had been together at the Court at L'schen; what a happy, merry time it had been,

\* To meet again. "Au revoir."

how much talent and information my mother had had, and what very beautiful verses she had written. At the same time she shewed me a thick book, bound in red morocco—it contained poems, and a drama written by the deceased, which had appeared a short time before her death. Most young girls in my position would have been pleased to find such a favourable preparation for them on their first appearance at Court, and would have considered it as a piece of good fortune,—I felt nothing of the kind. With a kind of painful aversion I gazed at the book; the pictures in it, then, were to blame that my early childhood had been robbed of the sunshine of a mother's love. While the authoress of them had been cherishing and cultivating the forms of her fancy in the light airy drawing-rooms, the soul of her child had been starved and famished between the four gloomy walls of that back chamber.

Perhaps some suspicion of the tenor of my thoughts dawned upon the Princess—I had already told her no effort on my part would enable me to recall my mother's face; at all events, she insensibly turned the conversation to my own past life—and with that, the remains of my embarrassment entirely fled. I related everything, and paraded Heinz, Ilse, Mieke, and the merry chirping magpies on the oak-tree tops through the Princess's apart-

ments; the old fir-tree too shook its needles there, and from the turf-mould and bog arose the water-sprites, and floated about there in their white garments, with heavy moist borders, through the deadly still Haide. I brought forward the snow-storm too, playing around the Dierkhof roof gables, and how I used to sit near Heinz on the stove bench, while the roasting apples crackled and sputtered in the hot oven. . . .

Now and then the pretty lady in waiting stared at me in blank amazement from behind the curtain, and regarded me with a stare of mock and derisive terror. But that did not affect me . . . the Princess's large eyes grew brighter and brighter, and rested on me with ever increased depth; she listened just as attentively, I might almost say breathlessly, as Heinz and Ilse used to do, when I used to read aloud the fairy tales in the fleet.

And I told her of the lizards, of the bees, and of the ants—they had been my companions, and I was as well acquainted with all their arrangements, all their habits and occupations, as I was with the household management of the Dierkhof. I confessed that all animals, even the ugliest and most insignificant, were dear to me, because there was vitality in them, and the faint sounds their voices and motions made broke through the deep solitude of the Haide. . . .

I don't know how it came about, but finally even the great Hun-grave came in for a representation, and there I sat on its summit, amid the golden broom, with outstretched arms, and sang out into the interminable waste.

The Princess drew me suddenly to her, took both my hands, and kissed me on the forehead.

"I should like to know how the solitary young voice sounded in the Haide," she said.

I shrank back indeed with timidity and horror at the thought of my own voice reverberating against those four walls; but a kind of spell was upon me,—had I already become mistress of myself, and was one part of my child's life played out. I gathered up all my courage, and sang a little song.

Once, just in the midst of my singing, I was put out—the grey eyes of the young Court lady glowed and varied so strangely from behind the curtain; involuntarily I thought of the cat at the Dierkhof, as she watched the poor little twittering bird on the mountain-ash bough with her glittering green eyes; but what was the little lady's displeasure to me? I was not singing for her, and my voice should not tremble on her account—I let it out therefore with all its power, and sang courageously to the end.

While I had been making these communications two footmen had noiselessly brought in a ready laid

table, covered with everything for tea, and just as my last tones died away, a gentleman in a black frock coat entered the room. He bowed low, then raising himself rapidly, he clapped his delicate kid gloves together in applause, with undeniable grace.

“Wonderful, your Highness! on my word, *magnifique!*” he exclaimed in raptures, as he eagerly but at the same time with noiseless footsteps approached the Princess. “But what cruelty to us all, your Highness,” he continued in reproachful tones; and letting his graceful arms droop in an attitude of dejection, this thoroughly elderly personage absolutely assumed the air and manners of a young girl. “For years we have been entreating, on bended knee, for but one tone from that throat which is veritably a nightingale’s—and in vain! . . . like a thief, like some unfortunate condemned to banishment must one linger outside the threshold, if once again one would taste the long denied delight. . . . What, do you call that an injured, ruined voice? That softness, that bell-like fullness of tone—oh, your Highness!”

He cast up his eyes to heaven, and kissed every finger of her hand. I was quite confounded. This kind of man was quite as new to me as an inhabitant of Otaheite would have been. His rather deep voice and carefully trimmed beard recalled

my senses, else I should certainly have vowed he was one of the Court ladies dressed in a coat.

“My good Herr von Wismar,” said the Princess, with a suppressed laugh, “in former days, I must plead guilty to having oftentimes wearied those around me, with indulging in melodies sung in a voice which was even at that time very weak, and very indifferent—but you ought not to remind me of that, more especially as I atoned for it, by leaving off in good time. However, I observe with the greatest satisfaction, that my musical misdemeanours are all happily forgotten, when our noble chamberlain has seen fit to exalt my contralto to a bell-like soprano, the poor little linnet to a nightingale. *Sidonie* sang *beautifully*,—but I, never.”

The “noble Chamberlain” stood there somewhat disconcerted. His long face was too amusing. I tittered inwardly, just as I had always done when Heinz had been paralysed by some unexpected turn of things.

Fräulein von Wildenspring had risen suddenly at the Princess’s last words. She gave a furious glance at my merry face, and placed herself at the tea-table.

“But, your Highness, the comparison is a very true one,” she whispered forth, as she busied herself with the tea-pot. “Although Herr von Wismar

makes a mistake with regard to the *kind* of voice, still your Highness did sing beautifully;—Gräfin Fernau *still* becomes quite excited when she speaks of it."

"Oh, my dear Constance, is that your only authority?" laughed the Princess. "Our good Fernau has been stone deaf for the last five-and-twenty years!"

"But papa and mamma are enthusiastic about it too," persevered the young lady, who nevertheless let her eyes droop beneath the sarcastic glance of her patroness.

"Pray, turn your eyes and your compliments towards your right, Herr von Wismar," said the Princess, pointing with her hand in my direction,—"there is the nightingale."

The gentleman turned round; till that moment he had not observed me, because my small person was concealed by a stand of gigantic plants. The Princess mentioned my name. I rose at the low reverence which the gentleman made me, laughed in his very face, and made him such a deep and successful curtsey, that Charlotte would have died of laughing had she seen it. The demon of mischief which, since my grandmother's death, seemed to have gone to sleep, woke up all at once and restored the power of movement to me once more.

Herr von Wismar at once launched forth into a strain of compliments, which compared my father's simple daisy to a bright rose-bud, and raised me to the position of a fairy-vision; he gently chided "the good Doctor" for having hitherto deprived the Court of my enchanting presence, and for having left me too long at school.

"What school were you brought up at, may I ask?" he enquired finally.

"In a country-village, Herr von Wismar," said Fräulein von Wildenspring with the innocent smile of a child.

The Chamberlain was stunned; but a glance at the Princess's face looking so kindly at me speedily restored his equanimity. "Oh, thence comes the delicious spring-like freshness of her voice. The country air, yes, the country air! . . . What an acquisition it would be at our Court concerts, your Highness . . . so chaste, so perfectly untouched . . ."

"What an idea, Herr von Wismar," interrupted the young maid of honour; "Fräulein von Sassen cannot possibly bear a comparison with our superb Prima Donna from the Court theatre—no, I should really feel sorry for her in such a position."

"Look after your tea, Constance," said the Princess, "I fear it will get bitter. Besides, you may be quite at ease, I shall certainly not accept

the proposition; rare guests should be guarded like the apple of the eye, and this refreshing breeze from the Haide, which has suddenly burst into our sultry atmosphere from the distant "country village," shall be kept for myself alone."

Fräulein von Wildenspring was silent. She seized the tea-pot, and poured out the first brown and undrinkable infusion into the silver slop-bowl so suddenly and violently that the damask cloth was all sprinkled over with the brown drops.

"And you are living now with your papa in Claudius's house?" enquired Herr von Wismar, suddenly, as he caught the haughty and reproving glance with which the Princess measured her awkward lady in waiting. The Chamberlain seemed to act as a kind of lightning conductor at Court.

"We live in the Carolinenlust," I replied.

"Ah, in poor Lothar's rooms," he remarked, in a tone of regret to the Princess.

"Oh, dear, no," I replied eagerly, "not in them, they are sealed."

I remarked a faint colour rise on the Princess's cheek, and spread up to the roots of her curly hair. She had caught hold of one of the overhanging blossoms of an Hortensia with both her hands as it stood on a table near her, and buried her face in it, apparently inhaling its perfume.

"Still sealed, and for what reason?" she enquired after a momentary pause on the part of the Chamberlain. "Is not his brother sole heir?"

Herr von Wismar shrugged his shoulders. He assured her he knew nothing more about the matter; those were things of the past, and the name of Claudius had never since been mentioned at Court till the late discovery of antiquities by Herr von Sassen in the merchant's house had brought it up again here and there.

"The seals are to remain on the doors to all eternity," I said softly. I remembered my discoveries well, and what I had heard, and I felt ashamed of myself; still, for all that, I did not intend the Princess to remain without any information on the subject. "The deceased wished it so; and Herr Claudius therefore never allows one of the seals to be touched; he is strict, oh, terribly strict."

"Ah ha, that sounds almost as if you were yourself afraid of him, my little lady."

"I afraid of him? No, no, not I," I protested angrily; "I am not afraid now, not in the very least . . . but I cannot bear him," came out involuntarily.

"Oh, that man cares for nobody, nobody in the whole world; that is an understood thing," I said briskly. "There are only two things he cares about, work, Charlotte says, and his great account-book . . .

flowers, an inexhaustible wealth of flowers are his, he could bury himself and his ugly house in the Mauerstrasse in them; but in the room he works in, where he labours from morning till night, he never allows even a green leaf near him. . . . Watch in hand, he scolds his people if they are a moment late entering that abominable nest, and at night he gazes at the stars in the sky, because he can count them like the thalers on his table. He is miserly, and never relieves any poor person. . . .”

“Stop, my child,” said the Princess, “I must contradict you there. The poor of this town have no better friend, though his charity may be conducted in a manner peculiar to himself, and his signature may consequently be often absent from collection and subscription lists.”

I paused a moment in surprise. “But he is hard and cold,” I resumed, “cold as an iceberg to—to Charlotte,” I burst out, “and he pretends to know everything better than any one else.”

“A nice list of iniquities,” laughed the Chamberlain. “But the man showed lately that he really does understand some things better than other people,” he added. “Our knowing Count Zell has, to the infinite satisfaction of everybody, been nicely duped at last. His Darling, which he brought back on his last journey, was a splendid specimen of

beauty and elegance,' but a tricky beast. Many maintain that he has been a circus horse, so singular are his habits. Zell was dying to get rid of him; but in our circle there was of course no one who would bite; but out of consideration for Zell every one was discreet, so as not to prevent others from coming forward, . . . and young Lieutenant Claudius was all on fire about him. Several intimate friends of Zell's had made up a plausible story about the acquisition he would be, but his uncle saw Darling and refused to purchase—fortunately for the young man; for before another hour, the beast had thrown Bunker Tressel's son, who had bought it, and is a very fair horseman; and the animal has also kicked him very badly."

"I must say, Herr von Wismar, that this 'discretion' in your circle, as you call it, is very offensive to me; and Count Zell may take care how he makes his next appearance at Court:" so said the Princess, her large eyes glittering with indignation. "Is the fall likely to have bad consequences?"

"I scarcely think so," stammered the Chamberlain. "But your Highness may be quite at ease, and remember who the horseman was," he added, coughing slightly, and smiling at the same time; "that is robust blood, and quite different flesh and

blood, not easily injured. A few scratches and blue bruises will end the matter."

"You were speaking previously of a Charlotte in Claudius's house," said Herr von Wismar, turning to me, and feeling no doubt, that he had gone a little too far. "Is that the imposing handsome young girl?"

"Yes, isn't Charlotte handsome?" I interrupted him delightedly. I at once forgave him all his childish folly for the sake of this one portrait he had drawn.

"Too colossal for my taste, and too much of the emancipated young lady; I have met her occasionally at the 'female society,'" said the Princess, more to the Chamberlain. The meaning of "emancipated" was altogether unknown to me, but I heard that there was disapprobation in the lady's tone, and it pained and wounded me deeply. "A singular kind of relationship it is to have in a house. How did Claudius come to adopt the children of a Frenchman?"

Herr von Wismar raised his shoulders, evidently unable to throw any light on the subject.

"And those we are speaking of are anything but grateful for this same adoption," said Fräulein von Wildenspring. "This Charlotte always angrily resists taking the name of Claudius. Méricourt was

on her schoolbooks, and her school-fellows were often mischievous enough to call her by her detested name instead, just to see how her sparkling eyes looked."

"Oh, then you know the young girl pretty well, Constance?" enquired the Princess.

"As far as school-fellows of a different station happen to mix with each other, your Highness," replied the young Court lady, shrugging her shoulders with indifference. "We spent two years in the self-same school in Dresden . . . on her arrival here, she sought to renew our obligatory acquaintance, and paid me a visit.—"

"Well?" said the Princess, as the young lady hesitated for a moment.

"Papa was entirely opposed to any such intercourse between us, so I merely called there and left a card."

She paused suddenly, turned round, and made a deep and very graceful bow. A handsome young man, with a very grave face, entered the room by a side door, in company with my father and several other gentlemen. It was the Duke.

The Princess received him with all the affection of a mother; then presented me to him. I needed no great increase of courage to enable me to look up at His Serene Highness, and to reply to the

friendly questions he asked me; I had rapidly become at my ease, and the daisy was able to raise her head confidently over a great deal; my father looked at me in amazement, and suddenly stroked my hair caressingly with his hand.

His face was greatly flushed again. I looked at the gold medals, several of which the Prince was shewing to his aunt, with absolute hatred. He told her that this acquisition had cost him a considerable sum, but that it would make the already far famed medallion cabinet of the Court of K... one of the most perfect in the world; for, by the purchase of this day, he had acquired specimens which, to many a connoisseur in such matters, would seem almost as fabulous as the fairy tales.

I saw the nervous twitching which convulsed my father's face almost incessantly, and I pitied him inexpressibly. I could easily picture to myself the agony it must have caused him to see these ardently coveted treasures passing from hand to hand, as the lawful property of another, amid universal admiration: and bitterness against him who, with his shop wisdom, had been the cause of this renunciation, made my whole soul rise in rebellion, and caused me entirely to forget all reserve.

"Look here," I said in a low voice to the Princess, who was just inspecting the Imperial medal

with delight; "Herr Claudius pretended to know better about that too; he maintained that that medal there was not real."

The Duke turned round, and fixed his piercing glance, to my terror, half in surprise, half in anger, on my face.

My father, however, laughed, and again stroked my hair back from my forehead with his hand. "Just look at this little diplomat!" he exclaimed. "It is fortunate papa is safe in the saddle, or this cunning little chatterbox might make trouble for him. Ridiculous!" he added, shrugging his shoulders, and addressing Herr von Wismar . . . the only person who tried to assume the air of a sceptic, although the old dotard knew no more about the matter than the man in the moon. . . . "Ridiculous! the fellow understands about as much of numismatics as I do of his tulip-raising . . . but for your satisfaction I will just mention that the disposer of these medals has left K... to-day with several letters of recommendation from me in his pocket. He is about to visit the various Courts and Universities under the ægis of my name. Is this a sufficient guarantee to you for the new acquisitions made by His Highness on my authority?"

Herr von Wismar smiled with an embarrassed

air, and assured my father that the faintest doubt never crossed his mind.

A regular storm now arose among those present against dilettantism, and none expressed greater disgust than Fräulein von Wildenspring, who, with an air of the utmost confidence, had interspersed the conversation with scraps of learning.

"The dilettanti are, and have always been, the plague of the professional man," said my father. "Up to this, I must confess, I have had nothing to say against the elder Claudio,—he is intensely reserved, purposely avoids meeting me in his own house or grounds, and lets me do according to my pleasure with his art treasures; on the other hand, my so-called 'familiar' often wearies my very life out."

"Oh, the dandy lieutenant?" laughed one of the gentlemen.

"He sips knowledge as the butterfly the flower blossom," continued my father, with an affirmatory nod of his head. "If one but makes the most distant approach to a call on his reflective powers he's off on the spot! . . . To him the present predilection for antiquities which has been made the fashion by the Court, has just the same meaning as those incessantly changing follies of fashion, that make him use a gilded saddle to-day, a beetle *breloque* to-morrow.

He accompanied his uncle a short time ago on a business journey to the North. At his earnest request I gave him a letter of introduction to Professor Hart in Hanover, who in consequence was kind enough to accompany them to a group of Hun's graves in the Haide, and to have one opened. . . . Oh, how the discoveries they made looked when the young lieutenant brought them to me. Bent and broken to pieces, 'because,' as he excused himself, 'he had put them in one and the same chest with some minerals which Professor Hart had given him at the same time for a college friend!' My heart really grew sick within me."

Little did my father suspect that at that moment my heart had also grown sick within me, that I felt an indescribable ill-will towards those I was sitting among. They laughed and jeered, and nobody ever thought of taking the part of the absent. The Princess had at once excused Herr Claudius when I had gone too far in my accusations,—even Herr von Wismar had spoken in his favour,—but for Charlotte and Dagobert there was not one friendly word—the poor things! . . .

The Princess suddenly interrupted the general conversation by a question addressed to my father, as to when the arrangement of the antiquities in the Carolinenlust would be finished. She felt much

interested in the art treasures which had been brought to light, and intended to accompany the Duke on his first visit.

"I have another idea at the same time," she said; "I have a strong desire to see the Claudio establishment for once . . . its conservatories are far-famed . . . but I have always hesitated to go there direct . . . for the owner's burgher pride is quite intolerable; on that account I fear it may be difficult to see the grounds . . ."

"And then remember too, your Highness, the decidedly pietistic tone which the establishment has assumed for some time past, and which is so repugnant to your Highness," added Fräulein von Wildenspring energetically. One could see that the Princess's intention of visiting the house was odious to her.

"On that very account I am making an excuse of the art treasure exhibition. . . . I can see the garden in passing through, and do not need to take either the pride of the owner or yet his pietistical tendencies into account."

The young Court lady handed her patroness a cup of tea in silence, and then resumed her work with apparent submission. The remainder of the evening was occupied in a lively discussion on ancient art, and the Court gentlemen, who had so

and Charlotte threw her arm round my shoulder and drew me to her.

“There is nothing else for it, little one; you must be something of a lightning conductor,” she said half aloud and hastily to me. “Over there,” and she pointed towards the greenhouse, “two hard heads are falling out with each other. . . . Uncle Eric so seldom spends an evening with us that Eckhof has gradually accustomed himself to play first fiddle at our tea-table. This evening, to our extreme amazement, uncle presided there himself; but we had scarcely taken refuge in the conservatory from the first heavy drops of rain, before Eckhof with the most inconceivable folly and want of tact began to reproach my uncle most bitterly for having invited Helldorf to dinner to-day—he has raised a wasp’s nest about his own ears!”

She paused, and stood a moment listening; Eckhof’s harsh voice was heard holding forth.

“It can’t hurt the old man, indeed, to have his mummeries in the business and in the house put some stop to,” she said, and one could hear the anger in her voice; “he has become too confident, and carries the thing too far, that is quite true; only it must not come before Uncle Eric’s judgment-seat; he murders the old man with his relentless eyes, his coldness and calm, which give the keenness

of a knife to every word he utters." She moved forward somewhat quieter. "God knows what has so suddenly given rise to this dispute. For years together Uncle Eric has gone about to all appearance blind to this influence in the house; Eckhof has always been careful to avoid exhibiting his peculiarities exactly before him, but in this hour of intense excitement he is unable to control his tongue, and a very stream of his jargon is issuing from his lips—it is really intolerable! It is repulsive to me to the last degree to listen to such stuff from a man's mouth; on the other hand, I owe the old man many thanks—he always stands up for Dagobert and me, and that makes it my duty to cut his punishment as short as possible . . . come along, your appearance will put an end to the whole scene."

The nearer I came to the conservatory . . . it was not the one Darling had ruined . . . the more I felt as if in a dream; I no longer heard what Charlotte was whispering, but allowed her to lead me mechanically along; the hothouse lay far to one side of the middle walk, and till now I had never approached it nearer, I had merely seen the glitter of its enormous panes in the distance. Botany and geography were both, as a matter of course, unknown worlds to me then . . . and I had no idea that the extraordinary structure yonder was quite a spot of

tropical life imprisoned in glass, and set down in the midst of German vegetation. I had but two words for it—marvel and effect.

But neither tubs nor flower-pots were to be seen there as in the other hothouse. In the very centre, and from the ground itself, rose stately palm-trees, so high that they seemed nigh to bursting through the protecting glass. Water gushed over rocky brown masses—its spray dashed against the crags in sparkling drops, and made the exquisitely pinnated feathery fronds of the ferns, which grew around in luxuriant beauty, tremble incessantly. Cactuses grew upon the stones, with their strange, fat helpless-looking forms; but long purple bells hung down from their green flesh; and within, even in the distant dusky twilight, the wonderfully cut and twisted plants shed a yellow golden hue around, like pale, scattered light reflectors.

I looked up at Charlotte, fancying she must be influenced by the same charm, and would wander on like the inexperienced morsel of humanity at her side . . . I never remembered that all this formed a part of that “shop,” which she and Dagobert so determinately hated and despised . . . her glittering eye was fixed on one spot—Herr Claudius’s face.

He was standing near a palm-tree, in the full light of a lamp, and looked as tall and straight as

its elegantly proportioned stem . . . it was not true, there was no killing coldness in his relentless eyes at that moment. He had a slight colour, and his face was animated from inward excitement, though his arms tightly folded over his breast gave him an appearance of calm and immovability.

The tea-table, which had been hastily pushed in, looked strange enough amid such surroundings. Dagobert was sitting on the edge of it. He was still in uniform, and the glitter and brilliancy on his breast and shoulders produced a very different effect, amid the gorgeous colouring of the tropical bloom, to that which his uncle's unadorned form did. . . . With his back turned to Herr Claudius, and in evident embarrassment, he sat balancing a tea-spoon on his fore-finger, looking just as if he had been involuntarily obliged to bend beneath a passing tempest. He seemed to have kept aloof as entirely from the unpleasant discussion as Fräulein Fliedner, who was knitting as rapidly as though some institution for destitute children stood in immediate need of new stockings for its every inmate.

“All that is quite ineffectual with me, Herr Eckhof,” said Herr Claudius to the bookkeeper who stood, his hands resting on the back of a chair, at some distance from his chief, but his head all the same thrown back with an air of pride. . . . He had

just that moment been speaking in his telling voice; in that emphatic and marked manner which *must* perforce hit home. . . . "Blasphemers, unbelievers, infidels—these favourite epithets of your party must not be under-estimated in their effect," continued Herr Claudius; "it is by their means you accomplish the well nigh incredible fact, that in the nineteenth century a large party of more enlightened people submit to a handful of narrow-minded fanatics, at least in outward seeming. Many, even people of intellect are influenced to a certain extent, and stand in awe of these anathemas, and so remain silent contrary to their better judgment . . . and this supports your party still as on a judgment-seat, though resting indeed on feet of potter's clay. . . ."

The chair shook and swayed beneath the book-keeper's hands, but Herr Claudius did not allow the sound to disturb him.

"I honour Christianity,—understand me aright—not the church," he continued, "and I have consequently carried out and held fast all the directions of my predecessors, coinciding as they do with my own firm convictions; and in accordance with their pious intentions, all employed in the Firma Claudius shall be piously educated—but I will never allow my house to be made a nest in which to hatch religious errors. A mercantile house that has its cor-

respondents in every quarter of the globe, the business relations of which extend to Turkey, China, and the whole world; and that black orthodoxy, that infallibility of faith, confines it like a snail in its shell . . . there cannot be a more absurd union! . . . How awfully must our young commercial travellers, whom you take such pains to bring up in the orthodox faith, play the hypocrite when they come into friendly intercourse with those whom you have taught them to consider as despised and cast-off by the Almighty. . . . No, I cannot forgive myself for having allowed such a gloomy spirit to run riot here, that my people have been compelled to bear . . . ”

“I have not compelled anyone,” interrupted the bookkeeper.

“Certainly not with the knout in your hand, Herr Eckhof—but, as far as your position here allowed. . . . I know, for instance, that our junior clerk, whose salary is but moderate, and who is obliged out of it to support a widowed mother, I know that he has been obliged to subscribe to your mission box, far beyond his means;—a thing of the existence of which I had not the remotest idea. Our work-people all, without exception, permit you to deduct a certain sum weekly from them for this same mission box—because, in fact, they dare not do otherwise, thinking you can do anything with

me, and might injure them. . . . Do you never consider, then, how dearly these people have to pay for their faith without this addition? Their baptism, the celebration of their marriages, the communion service, even their departure out of this world, the church demands a tithe of their labour for all these; therefore, away with the mission box out of my house, away with all the rubbish I found in the work-room drawers yesterday, which ruin our noble language with their silly, childish nonsense, and recall views belonging entirely to the unenlightened Middle Ages."

These crushing remarks were all made in anything but a loud voice or passionate tone; and the colour scarcely deepened on his cheek, as he occasionally stretched his hand out indignantly towards his bookkeeper.

Charlotte stood riveted to the spot; she appeared to have forgotten that she had sought me out on purpose to put an end to the affair. "He speaks well," she said; "I wouldn't have given him credit for it . . . he is generally so abrupt and indolent about speaking . . . really, Eckhof is going to play the idiot, and throw down the gauntlet again; he will get another cuff," she exclaimed angrily, and fixing her glowing eyes upon the bookkeeper as if she would fain have pierced through the glass.

He had left the spot he had hitherto occupied, and had advanced a few steps nearer to Herr Claudio.

“Despise the ‘childish nonsense’ if you will, Herr Claudio,” he said—his pleasing voice could assume a tone of cutting sharpness—“it refreshes and strengthens me, and many other really Christian people . . . the Almighty wills that we should walk in simplicity, childlike simplicity, here below; and, therefore, we shall find pardon in His eyes more readily than if we made the works of the immortal *Schiller* and *Gæthe* our study, who, of course, do *not* destroy our noble language. . . . If you do not like my honest endeavour to serve my Lord and Master, if you will not allow it in your house, of course I must submit in all humility . . . only, I fancied it could not injure the house in the Mauerstrasse if a great deal of prayer were offered up in it . . . a great deal has occurred in it, which cries to the Almighty, and must be atoned for.”

“You have made me this indirect reproach already twice within the last few days,” said Herr Claudio, quietly. “I respect your age, and your service in the house, and on that account will do no more than refer to a mode of acting which does not despise raking up old sores, and endeavouring by their influence to prop up a power which

is on the wane . . . I leave it to your own decision, if such a method is noble . . . what I may have committed in my youthful folly and passion, I take upon my own shoulders,—unfortunately I have added yet another wrong course to it, in that I have, partly in the wish to atone for that son's absence, permitted you to go about the house and concerns quite unrestrainedly, and to do pretty much what you would even with myself. . . . It would be a crying sin were I to allow all the people who are dependent on me to suffer for my offence even one day longer. I *will* not have, I do not *wish* for your prayers, which are only enforced, and perfectly without effect."

"What did he do?" I whispered to Charlotte.

"He shot Eckhof's only son."

I tore myself away from her in horror, and with difficulty suppressed a scream.

"For pity's sake don't be so childish," said Charlotte impatiently, drawing me at the same time with one powerful movement once more within her reach. "It was an honourable duel in which Eckhof's son fell, and beyond a doubt the most interesting moment in Uncle Eric's whole 'bürgerlich' life. . . . But let us go in; matters have reached a climax."

Without more ado, she walked along in front of the glass enclosure with me, and pushed me in at the side-door. I stepped on fine gravel; serpentine walks wound

through shady thickets, which were overshadowed in their turn by rockeries interspersed with the finest velvet sward. The thinner this lattice work of leaves and branches became, the more nervous I felt. . . . I certainly did not stand in such a position towards the owner of the house as to warrant my intruding at these unseasonable hours during discussions never intended to meet my ear. . . . What if the master of the house were to be really angry? . . . I know not how it was, but all at once I felt myself unable any longer to think so lightly. "Oh, it is only Herr Claudius!" . . . I trembled before him.

Charlotte had thrown her arm round me, and as I endeavoured with the first impulse to make my escape, I felt my waist unmercifully squeezed. I was impelled forward as if the wind were blowing me on, and all at once we stood in the midst of the astonished company, as though we had fallen from the sky.

"I picked the Prinzesschen up in the garden," said Charlotte rapidly, and cutting short a sentence just about to issue from the bookkeeper's lips. "Dear Miss Fliedner, just look at the child; does she not look quite another person? She has been at the Court tea, and has driven home in the Court carriage just like Cinderella! . . . let us see, child,

if one of your little satin slipper hasn't been left on the castle steps!"

Notwithstanding my embarrassment, I could not help laughing, and I accepted the chair which Dagobert brought me. . . . Charlotte was right: the dispute was cut short, concluded, as if it had never taken place; and when I looked up, I caught sight of the bookkeeper disappearing by the very path we had come. . . . Herr Claudius was still standing near the palm-tree . . . with what shy curiosity did my eye scan him! had he not the brand on his forehead? He had killed a man!—I only saw the grave blue eyes looking down at me, and I shrank back timidly.

Fräulein Fliedner began to breathe freely once more; my arrival was evidently agreeable to her, and she pressed my hand tenderly.

"Tell us all about it, little one," she said, as she took off my hat and pulled out the crushed trimmings of my sleeves. "What was it like at the Court?"

I buried myself deep down in the cane-chair—one of the gigantic fern leaves, looking emerald-like by the lamplight, waved over my head; and others again hung sideways across, and fanned my bare shoulders soft and cool. There I sat, under the shelter of a protecting canopy as it were, and I felt securely concealed. In addition Herr Claudius drew

back, but he did not leave the conservatory—one could hear him softly pacing up and down, behind the groups of rocks and plants.

My courage rose once more, and I described my glorious *début*, at first with some hesitation, but gradually, as I became myself amused, quite fluently—how my so arduously prepared reverence had come to nought; and of my childish song, and the scrap of my history which I had related to the Princess with so much trustful simplicity!

Charlotte interrupted me every now and then with a burst of laughter, and Fräulein Fliedner could not forbear joining in it too occasionally, while she patted my cheek kindly; Dagobert alone did not join in the laugh; he looked at me with the very same expression of alarm as the grey-eyed young lady at Court, and when, in conclusion, I took off the shawl, because I felt it too warm, and threw it on the table, saying it belonged to the Princess, he took it up with the most indescribable respect, and hung it carefully on the back of his chair, which annoyed and irritated me beyond measure.

“Stop,” cried Charlotte suddenly, stretching her hand out towards me, as I was proceeding in my descriptions; “Just look, Fräulein Fliedner, and say yourself if the Prinzesschen, despite her dark blue eyes, is not far more like one of those interesting

daughters of Israel, such as the Bible represents, than a shoot of an old and thoroughly German stock.... There! as the luxuriantly curling hair stands out against the fern-tree,—pray, Prinzesschen, keep your hand a moment longer thus, above your forehead—she recalls the picture of Paul Delaroche's young Jewess vividly to my mind, as on the banks of the Nile she watches in secret the fate of the little Moses."

"My grandmother *was* a Jewess," I said, without the least embarrassment.

The measured tread in the background of the conservatory suddenly ceased, and a death-like silence reigned one moment at the tea-table where I was sitting, so that I could overlook a part of the garden through the glass. The moon had risen, but was still hidden beneath a bank of clouds, whose jagged edges were silvered by its light. The broad plain was flooded by a pale flickering light, which gave a spectral and distorted appearance to the objects around. The bed of white lilies, though distant, and partially hidden by the trees overhanging the stream, appeared notwithstanding to be the one spot which absorbed all the scanty moonshine. It shone brightly opposite to me, and made me think, with pain and anguish once again, of my poor grandmother, as she lay stretched beneath the oak. . . .

The whole scene as it occurred, and all I had suffered through that fearful night arose before me. The few and ever touching points of interest which had taken place between the mentally diseased lady and myself during those long years, then the sudden awakening of grandmother's love in her dying hour, my misery when I perceived the approach of death was about to rob me of this newly discovered heart, all this rose with overpowering vividness before me; and as it rose, so I spoke out. I also touched upon the dreadful interview between my grandmother and the old clergyman—how she had rejected clerical aid, and died in the Jewish faith, and how mild and forgiving the old pastor had been. Suddenly, while all were listening in the profoundest silence, quick heavy steps were heard on the gravel, and the bookkeeper, whom I had fancied safe long ago in the Carolinenlust, stood before me.

“The man was an idiot!” he literally thundered forth. “He should not have left the bed till he had brought the apostate soul back again. He should have compelled her to return . . . priests have means enough of rousing up the refractory even when they *will* tumble headlong into eternal death.—”

I sprang up. The idea that a voice such as this might disturb the death struggle of some soul,

thus remorselessly, and prolong the pangs of the departing, excited me fearfully.

“Oh, he *dared* not have done that,” I said. “We would not have suffered it, Ilse and I,—most certainly not—and I won’t suffer you now to speak another word about my poor dear grandmother.”

Fräulein Fliedner had risen quickly, and laid both her arms soothingly around me, while she cast an anxious glance over towards the rocky groups. The steps were audible once more, this time approaching the tea-table rapidly.

“Did you tell the Princess all that too, Fräulein von Sassen?” asked Dagobert quickly; he placed a barrier to further discussions by this question, and succeeded in silencing the approaching footsteps.

I shook my head in silence.

“Well then, if I may offer my advice, preserve the same silence in future.”

“But for what reason?” enquired Fräulein Fliedner.

“You can readily imagine, dear Fliedner,” he replied, shrugging his shoulders. “It is well known that the Duke does not look on Jews with too favourable an eye, because his former Agent Hirschfeld swindled him to a fabulous extent, and finished up by absconding. Further—and that is the principal thing—the name of von Sassen has been an

unstained one for centuries at Court. In his Highness's eyes Herr von Sassen's learning is of course the main feature,—but it is a different thing with other people—they doubtless, are chiefly influenced by the age and purity of the family's descent; such a disclosure on the young lady's part might have a baneful effect on the brilliant reception the Doctor has received, as well upon her own, which she would doubtless regret."

I remained silent because I could not understand how my father's mother having been a Jewess could possibly injure him; I failed entirely in forming any idea of those worldly systems which were as yet wholly unknown to me. It was also far from a suitable moment to reflect on the subject,—I was still trembling from the effects of the fright which the sudden and unexpected appearance of that dreaded old man had caused me. And there he was still, planted right opposite to me, with folded arms, and his eyes glowing like coals beneath his white brows, as if they would fain scorch me up. For the first time in my life I felt that I was hated—an experience so difficult for the young mind to grasp;—the air I breathed in the neighbourhood of my enemy seemed to stifle me; my stay in the conservatory became intolerable.

"I want to go home—Ilse is waiting for me," I

said, disengaging myself by a sudden movement from Fräulein Fliedner's arms, and seizing my hat, while my eyes roved with feverish longing over the cool large garden outside.

"Well, then, come," said Charlotte, rising. "I see in your glance we must not venture to detain you! . . . You are just in a mood to smash the panes like the wild Darling . . ."

"Darling threw his master to-day, and kicked him," I said.

Dagobert started up. "What, Arthur Tressel? the famous horseman? Impossible!" he exclaimed.

"Ah bah, a splendid horseman that! The man would have done wiser to remain at his desk," said Charlotte, with evident indifference; but a glance of fury shot from beneath her eyelids, which were cast down in apparent contempt, and stole towards the background of the greenhouse. "Did the poor young man hurt himself?"

"Herr von Wismar told the Princess that his was robust blood, and quite a different kind of bones —they were not easily smashed."

A low laugh was heard from the rockery—and I believe the shock of an earthquake could not have produced a more startling effect upon the brother and sister, than did my artless natural reply, and that immediate though scarcely audible laugh.

What had I, poor, terrified little creature, what could I have done, that Dagobert looked so fiercely at me? . . . In the first moment it seemed to be Charlotte's impulse to burst out with some violent exclamation in the direction of the rockery, but she conquered herself and remained silent, only throwing her head proudly back.

"Come, little one," she said; "give Fräulein Fliedner your hand, and say good-night—it is high time to take you to bed."

At any other time my seventeen year old dignity would have taken offence at this mode of treating me, but upon this occasion I forgave Charlotte on the spot; for the lips which thus compelled themselves to jest were white as snow; the proud girl was deeply wounded, that I saw, though all unconscious of the cause.

She walked beside me the length of the conservatory and the first part of the garden silently, and to all appearance calm; but scarcely had we well crossed the bridge, ere she paused, and taking a long, deep breath, pressed her hands to her heart.

"Did you hear how he laughed?" she enquired, her wrath breaking forth.

"It was Herr Claudius!"

"Yes, child. . . . When you have lived somewhat longer among us you will then learn that this

great and superior mind never laughs, unless it may be at the weaknesses of mankind, as he did a few minutes ago . . . little one, in future you must be more careful how you chatter about everything that occurs at Court when my uncle is with us."

I was disgusted. They had insisted on my relating everything, and I had in reality shewn a great deal of prudence for a creature of my open, uncultivated nature; not one word of all that had been said about Dagobert at Court had crossed my lips.

"What are you scolding about though?" I asked sullenly. "Am I not to say that they consider the fallen rider strong and powerful at Court?"

"*O sancta simplicitas!*!" exclaimed Charlotte, with a mocking laugh, "Arthur Tressel is tender and elegant—made of the finest porcelain. . . . Herr von Wismar's spirited sketch referred entirely to the worthy body of the burgher class; a cavalier would doubtless have broken his exquisite and peculiarly constructed ribs in such a fall, and his noble soul have winged its way at once back to heaven; but the robust burgher blood possesses far too much of the coarse low earthen element, and so plaster heals it, and it is not much the worse!"

She laughed once again, and proceeded with hasty steps towards the parterre of the Carolinenlust, I by her side.

The moon had now risen to the full, and was shining down on the little castle. The pale light, falling on this silent oasis in the midst of the gloomy wood, produced the same intoxicating effect upon my nerves as the strong scent of the flowers had done in the front garden. The marble Diana yonder looked so appallingly life-like that one expected every moment to hear the arrow whiz through the air! . . . The moonlight bathed the fruit and flower garlands and festoons upon the walls, lighted up the stony eyes, closed lips, and heavily burdened caryatides and floated upon the mirror of the water, and on the enormous glass window-panes. I could recognize every individual fold of the faded silk drapery behind the balcony door—the moon was gliding now with silvery beams within that secret chamber—but the lamp in that dreadful fanatic's room of course was not lighted.

“The man that lived there,” said Charlotte, pointing to the *bel-étage*, “he would have understood my brother and me. He shook off the dust and dirt of the shop-connection with a firm and decided hand, and stept boldly into that sphere where alone he could breathe the life that suited him.” She looked fixedly at the windows, and shrugging her shoulders, continued: “he fell from that state, no doubt, with smashed brains—but what then? He had neverthe-

less compelled the haughty and exclusive 'caste' to recognize him; he had become their equal, and trod with brilliancy and fame the path, which they so jealously seek to keep exclusively their own. Moreover it is all one whether this path extended over ten or fifty years. Willingly would I die early, if only I could thereby attain a twelve months' sojourn in high society. . . . I have tasted what it means to spend half one's youth among a set of haughty ambitious hearts, and to bear an imposed and plebeian name among schoolfellows of the nobility, who turn up their noses at one. I will not be always looked down on—I will not."

She shook her clenched hand upwards, and paced rapidly up and down, while her breathing seemed to grow faster and faster.

"Uncle Eric knows of this hidden fire within my breast,—Dagobert thinks, feels, and suffers just as I do—" she continued, pausing in her walk,— "and with all the cit-like pride of his position, he endeavours to suppress it, to stifle it . . . we ought to seek the foundation of our dignity in ourselves, and not in outward circumstances, says this great philosopher; ridiculous! that first properly roused me. I feel as if bound to the martyr's stake; the bridle galls me, and I curse the evil fate which brought the young eagles into the crow's nest. . . .

And whence these ungovernable feelings?" she demanded, as she paced slowly on. "They have been there since I drew breath; they must be in the *blood* that flows through my veins, . . . it is no chimera, that consciousness of aristocratic descent . . . threads may be woven which connect one being with another, which unite us with past greatness, even when they are perceptible no more; as, for instance, in this case of ourselves, over whose real birth a profound silence, an impenetrable darkness hangs. . . ."

These passionately uttered complaints were suddenly put a stop to, and ended in a kind of stammer, for there, at the entrance of one of the walks into the wood which we had just passed by, stood Herr Claudius, looking at the excited girl with grave quiet eyes.

"This darkness shall yet be cleared up, Charlotte, I promise it to you," he said, as quietly as though the violent outbreak had been directed specially at him, and he was replying to it. "But you shall only hear the truth, when you know how to bear it, when life and I—" here he pointed imperiously towards himself—"have made you more sensible. . . . Now, go back to the house, and get Dörte to make you a glass of *eau sucrée*. . . . One thing more: I most imperatively forbid you to take these moonlight walks in future with Fräulein von Sassen; the

desire of 'greatness' is infectious. You understand me?"

• Extraordinary to relate, this girl with the strong mind did not find a word of reply. Surprise must no doubt have paralysed her for the moment, and rendered her powerless. With head sullenly erect, she pressed my hand so hard, that I very nearly screamed aloud, then threw it violently from her, and disappeared in the wood.

I was now alone with him—fear and oppression seized my heart, but I would not let him see I was afraid—not now, at all events. Goliath, strong as he was had lost his head for a moment and fled... but David if of small stature bore himself the braver. . . . I walked for my taste far too slowly towards the Carolinenlust, and he kept beside me, silent . . . the hall was brilliantly illuminated; the corridor too, which lay behind my room, was lighted up every evening by Herr Claudius's desire with two lamps. At the entrance to this corridor, a step of which I had already mounted, he stood still.

"You left me this afternoon in ill-humour," he said. "Give me your hand, I had rather not make such unpleasant experiences as Heinz with the wicked raven."

He stretched out his hand to me. Through the door of the corridor, the lamplight shining through

a ruby-coloured glass window, threw a red reflection on his long white fingers, and the diamond ring threw out the most dazzling rays—I shuddered. \*

“It is full of blood!” I cried horrified, and knocking his hand away.

He drew back and looked at me—never to my dying day shall I forget the glance that then met mine—never yet had a human eye regarded me thus, never! . . . he turned away and left the house without uttering one word.

Involuntarily I put my hand to my heart as though I had been stabbed by a dagger. . . . What pain I felt! It was remorse, deep remorse! . . . I rushed down the stairs, into the open air,—I wished to give him the hand he had asked for, and beg of him not to be angry. But the gravel walk was empty; and I did not even hear the sound of retreating footsteps—Herr Claudius must have gone by the soft woodpath.

Deeply cast down, I at last sought Ilse. Her ever watchful and sharp eyes at once noticed the drops on my eyelashes, but I told her that that abominable blood-red glass in the corridor was the cause of it, and that it would have been far better if Darling had broken it, instead of the greenhouse.

## XXII.

THIS evening was succeeded by many days of an anxiety, such as I experienced for the first time in my life—anxiety about a sick father. He suffered so frightfully from headache, that for three whole days he was unable to go up to his beloved library. The wild bee which could never bear to pass one half hour in the Dierkhof rooms during sunny weather now sat from early morning till late at night at the feet of the sufferer, listening anxiously to every movement, and to every sound that came from his lips. The yearning for a sight of the August sky outside never once assailed me; sunbeams too, floated every now and then through the darkened chamber, and that was, when I sat on the side of the bed, and was permitted to lay one of my cool hands alternately on the invalid's burning forehead, when, faintly smiling, he would whisper to Ilse, how little he had thought what a blessing it was to have a child; since the death of my mother, he had always felt on the recurrence of his old malady—he suffered periodically from these headaches—doubly desolate and ill, because there was no careful hand, no eye with tender forethought around him; he would

now lament with tenfold regret the many years father and daughter had been separated, as a great and irreparable loss.

The Duke's private physician visited my father frequently. Every day a footman came twice to enquire after the state of the invalid, and to bring him refreshments; in fact, Ilse's hands were full, and she had more than enough to do to reply to the innumerable anxious enquiries which poured in from every quarter. In the front house too, no little sympathy was shown. Fräulein Fliedner came herself every morning to make personal enquiries, and put the whole house and its occupants at our disposal.

... Charlotte too, came one evening to spend half an hour with me, to comfort "the little one," in her "anxiety" as she said. But it seemed to me as if she stood far more in need of external cheering than I did. Something dark and gloomy lay brooding over the heavy brows, and the hitherto proud and careless assurance of her bearing was now replaced by a fidgety nervousness. She never alluded to the meeting with her uncle in the wood by a single syllable; but on the other hand she gave me a lively description of the impending storm which threatened the front-dwelling every moment. Herr Claudius was carrying out with a high hand his resolution of cleansing his house and business premises

from the hypocrisy which had crept into it. He had magnanimously left the collections already made from the work-people towards the missionary box in the bookkeeper's hands; but had replaced an equal sum from his own means, as a fund in a newly established money-box erected by him, for the purpose of forwarding the erection of a *Realschule*\* for the sons of the work-people, and to lighten the expenses of the marriage portions for the daughters of the poor. The young clerk who, from a service of love, had subscribed to the mission box far beyond his means, had received a severe reprimand, and a threat that any relapse into such hypocrisy would be followed by his dismissal. The bookkeeper was of course going about with a face of fixed and inexpressible ill-humour—that I knew already, for I had seen him several times, through a split in the blind, walking round the pond, in company with the brother and sister. The bond between these three individuals appeared through these new circumstances to have been drawn still closer—the walks together in the wood testified to that.

As often as Charlotte mentioned Herr Claudius's name, I felt a slight pang within me; but the torments of remorse and self-reproach had considerably abated since I had repeatedly reminded myself of the irritating

\* Academy.

fact, that the origin of my father's illness lay in the excitement from which he had suffered about the purchase of the medal,—the admirable and sharp logic of my seventeen-year-old head laid the whole blame on the hard-hearted refuser of the one remedy—and so—we were quits!—

Now, however, the evil days were past. The windows of the sick chamber stood wide open, air and sun streamed in again, and Ilse was dusting and scrubbing as if the whole sand of the desert had been poured out there. I had accompanied my father on his first visit to the library, boiled his coffee for the afternoon in the machine up there, drawn the green curtain partially, just as he liked it, and wrapped a wadded quilt round his limbs. I knew he had been well attended to, and that he was calmly happy at being once more able to resume his labours; now and then I flew away like an arrow from the bow: now I began to value the delicious wood-sward, the refreshing shade underneath the millions of interwoven boughs. The sun hung like a dazzling globe of fire over the garden—it looked just as if it longed to drink up all the blue water of the pond, which was lying dead and lazy within its stone circlet.

I turned into the path which I had not trodden since the previous Sunday, and crept into the

thicket,—there stood Gretchen's little basket-carriage still filled with the half crushed, half decayed strawberries—nobody had asked to get it back again; possibly the old gardener Schäfer had looked for it, but been unable to find it. . . . How sorry I felt for the poor child, who no doubt mourned over the lost toy. Her parents were poor, so poor that their mother's hands bore the signs of toil, and she was very probably unable to supply the loss.

Although Herr Claudius had not spoken a word of direction to me individually in the late scene, he had notwithstanding placed a perpetual bar to any repetition of such an offence—at least so I fancied—when he took out the key and put it in his pocket; nevertheless, I made at once for the garden door—lo and behold, what did I see, but a new lock before me! A strong, solid lock, without a key; the bolts and bars were also quite new—dear me, what an amount of respect must they have for the powerful little hand, that they had thus, as it were, set the gate anew in iron!—

I clambered up the elm-tree; but on this occasion it was no joke. I had what they termed my *lace* things upon my feet, and had slipped my elegantly attired limbs into the old Haide shoes,—oh, what a world too wide they were for me! Every

moment they threatened to part company with me, and to stay behind in the thicket.

At last, however, I sat perched on the very top of the elm. A child's little carriage stood on the balcony of the Swiss-cottage, completely shaded by the wild wine (Virginian creeper)—little Hermann was lying in it, on white cushions, very lazy, but also very content. Near him stood Gretchen, munching a large piece of bread and butter, chattering between whiles to her little brother; in the room within I could see their mamma ironing, and coming every now and then to the door, with a flushed face, to look after the children.

Who could have thought, looking at the soft womanly face before me, that such a storm as that I had seen pass over it on Sunday last was possible? At this moment there remained as little trace of it in the smiling features as there appeared any complaint on Gretchen's part over her lost carriage. But I was determined the child should have it again without further delay; I intended to fill it with fresh strawberries and flowers, and to beg the old gardener, Schäfer, to carry it back. I left the top of the tree, and began to swing myself down from one bough to another, when I heard people all at once approaching from the Carolinenlust; they must have been very near me already, for I shrank back in

terror at the sound of the old bookkeeper's voice, which sounded to me as if he were standing already at the foot of the elm tree. I did not again reach the top of the tree without some considerable noise from my heavy encumbrances, but I clasped the trunk with my arms, and sat perfectly still, hoping that the storm would blow over quickly, for I was sitting on a very slender bough, and listened with a beating heart to what passed below.

The first thing I saw, through the leafy canopy, was Charlotte's purple velvet bow, which she generally wore in her hair,—and where Charlotte was, there of course was Dagobert; the brother and sister had fled once more from the sultry and storm threatening atmosphere of the house; they were miserable, and needed comforting, but it affected me painfully all the same to see that they turned to this disagreeable old man in their necessity.

The wanderers turned into a path, close to my place of concealment. Eckhof lowered his voice perceptibly; but his fine clear intonation enabled me notwithstanding to catch quite distinctly every word he uttered. He held his hat in his hand; the snow-white partition of his hair shone clearly, but his appearance otherwise indicated an unwonted gloom—the grim and embittered expression of countenance showed innumerable folds and wrinkles

.in the usually smooth, one might almost say conceitedly tended, face.

“For heaven’s sake, hold your tongue with your consolations,” he exclaimed standing still, but not very politely. “The consequences cannot be calculated! Neither of you can be judges of it, since neither of you know what an immense step it was to gain over the house of Claudius with its many dependants to our ranks,—that had produced an effect, and brought back many a weak one, and many a waverer, into the church once more. . . . And now the edifice raised with so much toil is all at once, and with such *éclat*, such mercilessness, thrown to the ground. . . .”

“Uncle is cutting off his nose to spite his face,” said Dagobert coldly. “The powerful and wealthy have no better ally and protection than the church against the multitude of those who make a stand against them. . . . Did I but possess wealth and power, your party would be the richer by one, at all events, and that an earnest partisan,—I understand the times, and belong to those who steadfastly oppose the giddy whirl which they call progress.”

“With regard to the church, Fräulein Charlotte holds quite different opinions from yours,” said Eckhof, his fiery eye resting piercingly on the young girl’s face.

"Yes, our views differ widely on that point," she replied, candidly; "if I possessed money, I should look upon it solely in the light of its supplying me with the means of solving the disgraceful and depressing mystery which hangs over our family's past history. I do not *want* to eat the crumbs which are thrown to me any longer, because I feel and know distinctly that it is unworthy of me, that in future days I shall probably feel ashamed of having done so . . . from this time forward I will scrape and save . . ."

"Fräulein Charlotte save?" broke in Eckhof, with sarcastic incredulity.

"I tell you," she continued, vehemently; "I would go about in sackcloth and ashes, only to obtain sufficient means to make a journey of enquiry to Paris . . ."

"And what if it were unnecessary to go so far to solve the mystery? . . ."

Every one of these words fell heavily like sounding brass in my ears and on my nerves. The man that uttered them with such weight and solemnity stood there as if he had with one single decisive step for ever freed himself from a heavy inward struggle. "Come with me," said he, abruptly and imperiously, to the young lady, who followed him mechanically, and in silence. He seated himself on the bench where I

had sat and sung the previous Sunday, and which was situated in a slanting direction opposite to my present hiding-place.

Oh misery, what a dreadful position I had got into! In mortal terror, I still clung to the elm's trunk, but half swinging in the air. I was afraid my weight might break the fragile bough on which I rested; and in addition to this, my unfortunate shoes seemed to find a pleasure in gradually, but none the less inevitably, slipping off my feet, which were helping to support me on the tree; the consequences would have been frightful—think, if such a monster had suddenly tumbled down, what an occasion for Dagobert, and what a splendid opportunity for my enemy to deliver to me an overwhelmingly severe lecture!

"I am going to relate a history to you," said the bookkeeper to the brother and sister, who had sat down beside him. "But first listen to a plain explanation. . . . What you are now about to learn does not proceed from any attachment to you on my part,—it would be a lie, were I to say so. Nor am I speaking from motives of revenge . . . but at this particular moment you must look upon me not as the individual Eckhof, but as a soldier to whom no choice is left,—when he must make one between men's earthly interests—were it even

those of his own family, of his own flesh and blood, and the good of the church."

And it was this blind fanaticism which actually and truly inspired Eckhof—he was in the deepest earnest in what he said. One could not fail to observe it in the glitter of his eyes, as he raised them for a moment, seeking the light of heaven, through the leafy canopy that shrouded him. . . .

"You have repeatedly assured me," he continued, "that once in possession of wealth and a distinguished name you would immediately join our party," he said to Dagobert.

"I repeat it solemnly again, I could not put either under better protection—thousands would not seem to me too much—"

Eckhof nodded his head. "It will be looked upon as some atonement for the many sins that were committed in secret, and the chastisement will at last be removed from those unhappy souls who have hitherto been doomed to wander about without rest," he said pathetically. "These evils all arose, properly speaking, from a merchant's son having despised that station of life where God had placed him, and choosen instead the military profession . . . he was a very fine looking young man, and understood all those arts which attract mankind, so the Duke ennobled him, and kept him continually at his side. . . . A

dissolute life was that which they led over there in those days, though it is from thence that purity, uprightness, and the fear of God ought to flow forth over all the land. The Duke was of a joyous disposition, and so was the Duchess his wife, as well as his youthful sisters, the Princesses Sidonie and Margaret, who were not unlike the daughters of Herod. They had their own way to a great extent, for the Duke loved them dearly; and they might have asked him for anything, save only his consent to a *mésalliance*, for he was proud of his princely blood. . . . The two beautiful sisters travelled here and there, just as they pleased; Princess Margaret resided more at the Court at L... than at home; but her elder sister had a strong predilection in favour of Paris and Switzerland. She often went away for two and even three months at a time, observing of course the strictest incognito, and under the care of an old and highly respectable lady in waiting, and a cavalier equally advanced in years—the good people are long since dead."

Here he paused a moment and stroked his chin, while I sat poised upon the bough in utter despair; the soles of my feet were cramped together in order to keep my shoes from falling off, and my temples were beating violently with the efforts I made, for I did not even venture to take a long

breath. And this man's narrative promised to be so extended, I could see no prospect of an end.

' At last he began again: "It was a very singular circumstance, however, that whenever the Princess Sidonie went to Switzerland another very beautiful young lady was sure to make her appearance in the Carolinenlust. She had precisely the same black curls, precisely the same slight form, and was altogether her very image. . . . On these occasions the bridge leading to the front garden was locked even more closely than usual, if possible, and along the bank of the river, on the side next the Carolinenlust, a strong paling was erected, which after Lothar's death was, of course, allowed to fall into decay . . . but one person enjoyed the honour of passing from the front residence over the bridge, without restriction, back and forward and that was Fräulein Fliedner. She had actually a key of her own, which she generally used in the evenings, or even late at night for this purpose; if you ask me how I come to know all this, I can only tell you that my late wife related it to me. She never, indeed, had any share in these dark doings—to her honour be it said—but female ears and eyes are keen and quick, and when female curiosity is once excited, women think little of wet feet, but are sure to find a spot in the river where they can slip through—"

“Ah, ha, the good lady listened too,” thought I, to my great satisfaction, and forgetting for a moment the danger of my position.

“That was a life such as turtle-doves lead. A magnificent voice used to sing the most beautiful songs, and late in the quiet night, the young officer’s epaulettes could be seen gleaming and glittering in the moonlight on the meadow yonder, while the fair slight lady hung upon his arm . . . once, however, Fräulein Fliedner hurried over the bridge without any apparent caution—lights were seen glancing to and fro in the windows of the Carolinenlust—and at midnight an infant’s cry was heard.”

Charlotte jumped up, with open mouth, as though she were gasping for breath—her sparkling eyes were fixed devouringly on the narrator’s face.

“For several years successively the lady’s presence at the Carolinenlust was noticed—the scene I have just described was repeated once more at a later date,” said Eckhof, continuing—“and then the gay, light-minded Princess Sidonie died suddenly of apoplexy at one of the baths; and the handsome Lothar, who was just then with the Duke at Vienna, three days later sent a bullet through his own head. . . . Herr Claudius came here some days after the dreadful

catastrophe; he had visited Vienna on his way, and had met Lothar there. The two brothers, who had met so seldom, were much drawn to each other on this occasion—that I have from Eric's own lips. The first time I was permitted to go in to speak to him, I could not forbear from touching on the occurrences which had taken place at the Carolinen-lust. He looked haughtily and displeased at me, and said, pointing to Lothar's pocket-book, 'My brother lived in honourable matrimony with his wife; the certificates are there,' . . . days after he had legal men there, in compliance with the wishes of the deceased. I stood outside in the corridor with them, while he once more went round the rooms, where his brother had lived. I saw him lay the pocket-book into a writing-table drawer, and lock it,—then he made the rounds of all the rooms yet again, which we were not allowed to enter, he shook the windows, closed the doors, and three minutes afterwards the legal seals were on them. . . . The two children born in the Carolinen-lust were . . . ."

"Quiet, quiet, not another word, don't say it," said Charlotte, springing up. "Don't you know I shall go mad, that I must die, if this—were I to believe this wondrous story, even if only for one hour long—and then must afterwards say to myself:

‘It is not true, it was but the silly imagination of a woman long dead.’”

She pressed her hands to her temples, and paced up and down.

“Calm yourself, and keep your head,” warned Eckhof, rising and seizing hold of the young girl’s arm. “I only ask you one question: if not the children of Lothar and the Princess Sidonie, whose children then are you? . . .”

Dear me! Charlotte the daughter of a Princess! I was within an ace of falling from my perch. . . . Now all was right, all . . . how unmistakably had the princely blood in their veins made itself felt! . . . I could have shouted for joy if it hadn’t been for the frightful torture of my feet, and that I felt the necessity of saving up the remainder of my strength to enable me to keep quite quiet. What would have become of me, if the grim old man had discovered me now, after his confessions, on my involuntary perch as a listener?

“How should it have occurred to Herr Claudius,” he continued, “to educate and even adopt the children of utter strangers, and of another nation too? You see, your lawful property, the inheritance of his brother, he does not deprive you of—he is too just for that—he goes even further, by not marrying he secures you his *own* fortune also: He will take

care that your pecuniary circumstances are brilliant, though perhaps not till after his death: until then he will keep you in leading strings—but your *real* name he will withhold from you for ever, because he does not wish the new sprig of nobility to continue—I know him well—he has the same unbending pride of all the Claudius family. But calm yourself now for the present," said Eckhof impatiently, "and collect your earliest recollections."

"I remember nothing—nothing," stammered Charlotte, putting her hand to her forehead—the girl's strong mind gave way beneath the weight of joy.

"Charlotte, collect yourself," exclaimed Dagobert, too. Outwardly he seemed far more tranquil than his sister; but he seemed to me suddenly taller, so proudly did he hold himself, and in his dark flushed face lay an expression which intimidated me. "Her recollections must in any case be very scant," he said to the bookkeeper, "for she was very little when our mode of life changed—indeed I know very little more myself. We did not spend our infancy in Paris itself, but in a small place in the vicinity of the town, with Madame Godin—you know that already. . . . I remember that my father used to let me ride on his knee, but for my life I cannot recall what he looked like. I only know

that his appearance was bright and dazzling . . . we were told once that he was an officer. . . . Mamma I saw very seldom—my dearest remembrance of her was on one afternoon. Mamma drove out with Uncle Eric and one other gentleman; they took coffee in the garden saloon, and Uncle Eric chased me over the fields, threw me up in the air, and carried Charlotte whole hours in his arms. . . . He was quite different then to what he is now; his face was handsome and fresh-coloured, and his movements were all quick and bright,—he could not have been more than twenty at that time?"

"He was one-and-twenty exactly, when he left Paris for ever," said the old man, with an increasedly gloomy aspect.

"Mamma seated herself at the piano," continued Dagobert, "and all the people cried out imploringly: 'The Tarantella, the Tarantella!' And then she sang so that the very walls trembled, and everybody went mad, and I with them. Madame Godin was often compelled to sing the same song again for me, in her weak old voice, when she wanted to coax me to be good and tractable, and never shall I forget that '*Gia la luna è in mezzo al mare, mamma mia si salterà!*' . . . My mother's face I cannot, with the best will in the world, recall. With the exception of the song, Uncle Eric played the chief part for me

that afternoon. If you were to shew me all the female portraits in the world, I could not pick my mother out . . . I only remember that she was very tall and slight, and wore long black curls hanging down her shoulders—perhaps I might have forgotten that too, if mamma hadn't scolded me many a time for disarranging them, with my wild caress . . . after this visit Uncle Eric used often to come alone; he used to spoil us then completely, quite different from now-a-days; then, all at once, he ceased to come for a long time, till one day he arrived suddenly, and took me away from Madame Godin and Charlotte. . . . That is all that I can tell you."

"It is quite sufficient," said Eckhof; "Herr Claudius may have been a partaker of the secret before, and accompanied his brother and sister-in-law to see their children. . . . The Princess almost always went to Paris, when the Duke travelled accompanied by his adjutant. . . ."

He linked his arm in that of the young officer. "Now, we must observe the greatest caution, and make further enquiries, if we wish to attain our common object," said he, strolling away with Dagobert into the wood. "From Fräulein Fliedner, the only person in possession of the facts, you will of course never glean the smallest information; no doubt she would be hewn in pieces first. How

innocent and harmless she can appear, can't she?—the old cat! . . . The Court lady, the travelling cavalier, and the Princess's own physician, who also had access to the Carolinenlust at that time, are all dead."

"And Madame Godin, too—years ago," added Dagobert, drearily.

"Only courage, we do not lack that; we will find ways and means," said Eckhof, resolutely, "but as already said all rashness must be guarded against, even should years pass by meantime."

They went on further. Charlotte did not accompany them. When she suddenly found herself alone, she threw up her arms into the air, and uttered something between a sob and a laugh. I was unable to distinguish whether it were the half-inarticulate expression of a frantic and indescribable joy, or—insanity. Exactly thus had I seen my grandmother standing at the well . . . terrified, I stooped down—pitter, patter, down went one of my shoes—the little nailed monster rustled down through the bushes with such vehemence, it sounded almost like the shot of a pistol. Charlotte uttered a half-smothered cry.

"Be quiet, for pity's sake," I called out, gliding down from the tree and running towards her.

"Ill-fated child, you have been listening!" came

between my fingers from her lips. I had covered them with my hand. She shook it off with an angry gesture, and scanned me with an irritated glance.

“Listening?” I repeated, deeply offended. “Can I help it, if you choose to come walking under the tree I am seated on? . . . can I call out, ‘don’t come here if you have any secret to tell each other, for I am perched up here, and won’t be seen at any price by that old man, who is always tormenting me in his anger’ . . . and why, may I ask, should I be an ill-fated child? I am delighted—delighted beyond expression, Fräulein Charlotte. . . . Now all is well. . . . Now you have a right to be proud. Only think, the Princess Margaret is your aunt!”

“Heavens! do you want to kill me?” she cried, shaking me so violently by the shoulder, that I swayed about like thistle-down. Suddenly she let go her hold, and began again pacing up and down with rapid strides.

“Don’t believe it—I don’t believe a word of it,” she said, apparently calmer after a long pause, during which she seemed to struggle for breath. “The old man yonder has grown childish—he has been dreaming of those times, and now he fancies that a woman long since dead told him that fairy tale . . . the matter receives some slight air of probability from

the fact of Uncle Eric having adopted us—up to this, nobody has been able to divine his reason for so doing, and I maintain that it never was from motives of humanity. . . . Nothing but an inspection of the Carolinenlust could convince *me* what amount of truth there may be in the old man's story, how far it really rests on facts. I find it impossible to believe that the haughty Princess—and our whole Ducal House is filled with the greatest and most evident pride—lived secretly married in the Carolinenlust; . . . I would swear that were the seals removed this very day from the doors, nothing whatever would be found within but the household appointments of young boon companions, the home of a youthful bachelor. . . .”

“Don't swear, Fräulein Charlotte,” I said in a whisper—I really felt like one bewitched and as if my brains were turned inside out. “A lady's silk mantle is hanging up in one of those rooms, and sheets of paper with ‘Sidonie, Princess of K.’ on them, are lying on the writing-table; it must have been written by her own hand, for neither my father's writing nor yet Herr Claudius's are anything like so delicate—I think only a woman writes like that.”

Charlotte stared at me. “You have been inside? . . . Behind the seals?” . . .

“Yes, I have been inside,” I replied at once,

though with downcast eyes; "I know a way, and will take you up to the rooms also—but not till Ilse goes away."

The moment I mentioned Ilse's name, an indescribable feeling of anguish came over me. I felt as though she were standing near me with uplifted finger, in an attitude of warning; as if I had done something very wrong, which could never again be undone. . . . Neither did it afford me the smallest comfort or consolation that Charlotte suddenly clasped me passionately in her arms, and with a frantic outburst of joy pressed me to her heart—had I not given up my good old Ilse for her? . . .

### XXIII.

ILSE's activity was called into greater request than ever during the next few days. She had discovered two locked-up chests among my father's goods containing house-linen, and which, from the time of my mother's death, had never seen the light. This gave rise to many a severe remark on the extraordinary man upstairs, who had all that broken trash unpacked as carefully as if it was made of sugar, while he allowed the finest table-cloths and sheets to rot away. Her face, however, assumed

a more cheerful aspect, as she saw the deep discolouring of time gradually give way to spotless snow-white beneath her busy hands, ably assisted as they were by the scorching rays of the sun; from this cause she naturally paid me less than her usual attention; she did not remark how often I threw myself upon her bosom in outbursts of tenderness, thereby endeavouring to atone for that treacherous "When Else is gone."

But other scruples also troubled me. It never occurred to me that there could be any danger to myself in thus mixing myself up in these mysterious affairs—I was far from possessing sufficient worldly wisdom for that; I was only conscious all at once of a kind of feeling of guilt towards the man in the front house, who sat at his desk so unsuspiciously, while everybody was secretly working their best against him. He was wrong—there was not the slightest doubt about that—he was depriving the two aspiring ones of their real name; I longed ardently that they should be put in their right position as soon as possible; but that under cover of the profoundest silence machinations should be carried on against him in his own very house and grounds, that the treacherous bookkeeper and the brother and sister following his example should sit at his table and converse with him, face to face;

that my father should be living in the Carolinenlust, just as if it were his own home, and acting just as he pleased in it, while his child was acting like an enemy to the master of it; all this pained me to my very heart.

“You were listening to us yesterday,” said Dagobert to me the following morning, knitting his brows fiercely, as I, frightened by his unexpected appearance in the hall, endeavoured to run past him. It seemed as though he had been waiting for me. The complaisant “familiar” had been transformed into an imperious gentleman since the night before; he looked just as proud and haughty as he had done on the hill in the Haide—and that annoyed me; still those flashing brown eyes had so much power over me, that not one of the angry words upon my lips would find utterance.

“Charlotte’s communications filled me with mortal terror,” he continued; “I am positively certain that the sparrows will this very day be chattering about our secret on the house-top, for you are far too young and inexperienced to understand what all this is about. One single rash word from your lips will give our enemy the advantage, and make our exertions unavailing for ever.”

“I shall not speak the word, however,” I replied, angrily; “we shall see who can keep a secret best.”

. So saying, I flew upstairs and rushed into the library. So there was a seal placed upon my lips now, also—and sooner would I suffer death than allow one syllable to escape them.

Dagobert's harsh brevity towards me made me feel refractory; Charlotte, on the contrary, inspired me with timidity and anxiety. For whole hours she would stand with folded arms, gazing at the closed windows of the *bel-étage* of the Carolinenlust with devouring eyes. She seemed to me to have grown much paler, and whenever she could catch me for a moment, she always seized me in her arms and whispered vehemently, "When is Frau Ilse going? I can neither eat nor drink—I shall sink under this martyrdom."

The only refuge I had against these troubles was with my father. He was just putting the finishing touches to the now perfected antique cabinet, for the Princess had announced formally that her visit would take place on the earliest occasion. He required my assistance; and if I began to handle the least attractive fragments of marble or terra-cotta with exactly the same care and delicacy as he did himself, it was entirely owing to the instructions with which our common task was interspersed. I began to discern, however faintly, the immortal spirit which dwelt within that "broken trash," which

had for centuries been circling in the human mind, and still in every form, in every hue, indicates the link which unites every new phase with each mighty step of human progress.

And thus approached a woeful, dreadful day. The glowing gold of an unclouded sun shone on the tips of the forest trees, and was reflected back from the blue waters of the lake. How I hated that lake anew, with its shining statues, its masses of foliage, already touched with the approaching autumn's tints. I stared on them all with a beating heart—the rich colouring lost itself in my sparkling tears.

“You must not cry, child, positively not,” said Ilse, passing her hard hand over my eyes. She had her travelling dress on, on the table lay her Sunday bonnet, and a little further off the box containing her few possessions, into which she had just knocked the last nail. She had already been upstairs to take leave of my father; I was not allowed to accompany her, but as I waited on the stairs below I could plainly hear the tones of entreaty in which she once more poured forth her sorely oppressed heart. She returned with cheeks like a red hot coal; the excitement, however, did not prevent her from using her duster as she came down; at every step she paused to polish the marble stair, for the

Princess, as she said, would be coming within an hour, and everything must look "shining with cleanliness."

She then brought out the case of pearls which my grandmother gave me.

"There, child," she said, laying the necklace round my bare neck; "the Princess must see that you did not come to your father altogether penniless. I know what an amount of money lies concealed in things like that; I have sometimes had to witness it, when my poor lady has been obliged to sell piece after piece of the Jacobsohn inheritance."

Her bonnet was then tied on hurriedly, her great shawl drawn over her shoulders so as to conceal the box which she had taken up under her left arm,—then, taking me with her, she marched, without ever looking round, towards the front house. I held her right hand in mine, and kept pressing it to my breast, as I followed her unconsciously. Not till we reached the hall did I draw back; for Ilse did not go towards Fräulein Fliedner's room, but at her request old Erdmann pointed out the so-called new office belonging to Herr Claudius."

"Are you going to act like a fool to the very last?" she enquired in a harsh tone as she laid down her box and proceeded without further ceremony to open the door shewn her.

Grumblingly I followed her into the dusky green room. I had not seen Herr Claudius again since the evening I had so hurt him—I had just as soon kept out of his way for ever—now, however, I was compelled to meet him, so I did it with as much daring as I could command—*he*, indeed, had plenty of guilt on his conscience; but I had none, no, none whatever!

He sat in one of the southern windows, writing. When he saw us enter the door, he drew a string; the green curtains flew asunder, and through the fragrant lattice-work of shrubs outside shone the coloured fields of flowers from the garden yonder. He stood up and offered Ilse his hand. I fancied after our last meeting that his eyes would look quite different, but they rested on me with just the same grave expression as on that day of our first meeting at his writing-table—they intimidated me.

“Herr Claudius, now it has come in reality,” said Ilse, and the pain of parting, which she had hitherto so bravely suppressed, betrayed itself in every tone. “*I must* go home now, unless the Dierkhof is to slip out of my hands entirely. . . . God knows how heavy my heart is; but *you* are my consolation; you know what you promised me, and—there is Lenore!”

Before I could foresee what she was about, she

had seized my hand, and wanted to place it in Herr Claudius's. He turned away his face, and opened a book he held in his hand; I understood him at once—I had lately shuddered at his touch.

“I will watch over her indefatigably, Frau Ilse,” he replied, with his usual calmness; “but if I shall eventually succeed in leading, or even influencing her, yet remains to be seen—”

“Herr Claudius, you never mean that the child will be wanting in proper respect?” interrupted Ilse; “Lenore knows very well that the Doctor is so occupied with his own affairs that he has little time to think of her, and some other there must be who will act towards her as a father”—I noticed a slight flush rise to his cheek, and spread over his whole face at this observation—“till she can return home to the Dierkhof. . . . I say it again, *you* are my consolation in this bitter moment, and though you haven't given Lenore your hand,—still, you are a grave, stern man, and she is still a mere child in thought and deed—”

“You are quite mistaken there,” he interrupted her. . . . Oh, what torment! there was Ilse now, probing the wound which I had given him. The deep sense of remorse once more assailed me—at this moment though I could make it all up again—but no, I dared not now; I should have been as

false then as the old bookkeeper, who betrayed his master, and yet to all appearance kept on a good footing with him.

“What your young charge will stand in deepest need of just at present, Frau Ilse,” said Herr Claudius, “will be comfort.” His eyes, to my great confusion, were fixed immovably on my face. “She looks so pale, I fear that horror and disgust at the limited space to which she is confined, and which already weighs upon her, will now become intolerable.” He took a new key from the wall, and laid it on the table before me. “I know where you will first be able to soothe the pain of parting, Fräulein von Sassen,” he said; “I have had the lock of the garden-gate newly arranged—the key belongs to you; you can now visit the Helldorf family undisturbed and enjoy your little pet’s society as often as you like.”

Ilse looked surprised, but there was no time for further explanations. A carriage came rattling over the pavement in the yard.

“Frau Ilse, it is time you were gone,” said Herr Claudius, looking out of a window, from which he drew back the curtain. His carriage was standing at the yard-gate, and old Erdmann was just lifting Ilse’s trunk into it.

"Ah, what, surely I am not going to drive in the carriage!" cried Ilse, in amazement.

"Why not? . . . I thought the parting would be over sooner, than if you left the house on foot."

"Well, then—in God's name . . . there, child, don't forget the key," she said, thrusting it into my pocket;—"I don't know what the object of it is; but Herr Claudius gave it to you, and so I leave it without question in your hands."

She shook him heartily by the hand. In the hall outside, stood Fräulein Fliedner and Charlotte. I was unable to bear the young girl's sparkling eyes and beaming smile, and laid my head sobbing on Ilse's breast—it beat heavily with suppressed tears. I could hear her hard breathing—for one moment her arms enclosed me vehemently. I saw Herr Claudius as through a mist standing between the green curtains above; he privately signed to Ilse to cut the torture short; it was needless—I did it myself. With hands pressed to my temples I fled through the garden, and only when I had crossed the bridge did I hear the carriage rolling through the gateway in the distance.

I closed the shutters, bolted the door, and threw myself into the corner of the sofa, where Ilse had sat last. I lay thus for hours in the deepest anguish....

The Princess Margaret came; my father received

her in the hall. I heard Herr von Wismar and the Maid of Honour chasing the crane, who had no doubt approached too near to the Right Honourable lady—to make his obeisance. The steps paused at the *bel-étage* the Princess was probably gazing at the mysteriously sealed doors. A frightful oppression seized me now Ilse was gone, and the moment near to which I had pledged myself, when I could add incontestable proof of the bookkeeper's communications. I put my hand in my pocket, and flung the key to the furthest end of the room, as though it burned my fingers. . . . I was trusted, where I was deceiving. Strange to say, that man in the front house was always at my side, turn which way I would, tenderly caring for me, grave and quiet, but not to be repulsed and yet I did not *want* any tie with him, I clung to the others, exclusively to the others; one day he must learn that,—to his sorrow. I buried my face still deeper in the pillow; at this moment, even the faint streak of light which crept through the shutters pained me. The Princess ascended still higher, and my father knocked at my door; he wanted to fetch me. I never moved, and was delighted when I heard the whole party leave the house; but not long after, Charlotte came racing up the corridor; she rattled unceremoniously at my door, and called out my name in an imperious tone;

when I opened the door, there she stood, looking haughtier and handsomer than ever, and in the most magnificent toilette.

“Quick, quick,” she exclaimed impatiently, “the Princess wants to see you. I really think you are out of your wits, hiding yourself that way in Egyptian darkness, and locking yourself up, all because you have got rid of that home-bred sermonizer! . . . Get away with your sentimentality.”

She ran her fingers through my hair, shook out my disordered dress, and the arm she passed round my waist led me along with such power that I quickly found myself on the road to the front house.

“I happened to be in the garden with Dagobert, quite accidentally, just as the Princess was passing through on her way to the hothouses,” said Charlotte in a careless tone,—with all my simplicity and boundless faith in every word she uttered, I could not refrain from casting a questioning glance at the studied elegance in which she had “accidentally” attired herself—“and what do you think, your absent papa, who generally speaking scarcely knows me from old Erdmann, actually undertook to present us, and, only fancy, it succeeded—succeeded perfectly, he never once confounded me with Dagobert!”

There was the old imperious tone again, which

always overawed me with its assumption of superiority.

"Uncle Eric was also caught by the Court party, of course quite contrary to his intention," she continued; "just as the Princess stepped in, he was giving directions as to some alteration in the large conservatory at the rockery. I am positive he is already secretly anathematizing the Court journal, which will, as a matter of course, give the whole account of the Ducal visit to the Claudio establishment in all its minutest details to-morrow. Of course he doesn't allow this to be seen; he has enshrined himself in the imperturbable calm and placidity of all his burgher virtues, and looks exactly as if it were *he* who was doing the high society honour! . . . Ridiculous, and I really believe it produces an effect upon the Princess—she smelled, if possible, every little flower, and is now gone to the front house to inspect the whole establishment dutifully . . . that odious back-room for instance . . . well, that is a matter of taste."

We entered the hall just as the Princess was leaving this same back-room. She was walking beside Herr Claudio, and had a magnificent bouquet in her hand.

"Where was Haideprinzesschen hiding?" she enquired, as she kindly smiled at me . . . so, Char-

lotte had already found an opportunity for acquainting her with my *sobriquet*.

"In a room like a dungeon, your Highness," said the young lady, answering for me. "The little thing is sad because she has had to part from her old servant to-day."

"I must beg you will speak differently of Frau Ilse, Charlotte," said Herr Claudius; "she has during years of love and faithful care sought to supply the place of a mother to Fräulein von Sassen."

"Well, then, she deserves that you should have cried your eyes out for her," said the Princess lovingly to me, and kissing my forehead.

Just at that moment Fräulein Fliedner came downstairs holding a huge bunch of keys in her hand, and, making a low curtsey, announced that everything was thrown open. The antiquated mercantile house interested the Princess extremely, and she expressed a wish to see the upper rooms also, when Herr Claudius told her that they had remained untouched for years . . . my father, accompanied by Herr von Wismar and the lady in waiting, now issued, laughing, from Fräulein Fliedner's room; they had been inspecting the presses filled with all kinds of rarities in glass.

My eyes followed Herr Claudius involuntarily as he slowly ascended the stairs beside the royal

lady. Charlotte was right—in his proud reserve and native nobility the “Kramer” looked as if *he* were conferring honour, not receiving it; and it suddenly struck me as if this nimbus of unsought grandeur shed a natural elevation over the house of his fathers, over the huge stone arches which majestically echoed back every word, every step, and on that broad, massive staircase, with its solid, yet exquisitely delicate iron balustrade.

The upper rooms, no doubt, exhibited the old burgher taste and practical mercantile sense, which had selected arrangements suitable “for all times.” Removed as far from the gay splendour of the Carolinenlust as heaven from earth, it nevertheless abounded in signs of wealth. There were no soft luxurious cushions, covered with rich white satin; the furniture there was all carved, indeed, out of the most valuable wood, but angular and wanting in all grace—probably something like those who had once dwelt among it; and instead of roguish eyes, flower goddesses looked down from their frames on the walls, with here and there an exception in the shape of some well-bred German lady by *Holbein*, with downcast eyes and exquisitely painted head-gear; but the indelible colours of real Gobelin tapestry also ornamented the walls; the floors were covered with leather, stamped in real gold, and the windows

were hung with thick heavy brocade, of gloomy magnificence.

The stern spirit of the old German burgher times, which even the walls here had caught, might be pleasing enough as well as surprising to the Princess. She passed through the open door of the first salon and took up a silver bumper in both her hands, an enormous, perfectly gigantic vessel, which was standing in the middle of the room on an oaken table. She endeavoured to raise it to her lips, laughingly—at that moment Herr Claudius sprang to her side, and caught the heavy goblet—it had slipped out of her hands; she was gazing, pale as death, at the portrait of the handsome Lothar.

For a few moments unable to speak, she covered her face with her hands.

If anything can recall us to ourselves in moments of anguish it is the awkward interference of others on our behalf. . . . Fräulein von Wildenspring rushed towards her mistress, and made an attempt as if to support her. The Princess collected herself, and threw her off with a haughty movement.

“What are you thinking of, Constance?” she said, in a slightly tremulous voice. “Are my nerves so very weak, that you suspect me of a tendency to faint? . . . May one not exhibit some signs of emotion when one suddenly beholds a form long since

departed, standing before one almost as if it were alive? . . . I must have left my smelling bottle in the conservatory, I wish you would fetch it."

The maid of honour and Herr von Wismar disappeared instantly down the corridor. Dagobert and Charlotte retreated to one of the window niches behind the impenetrable curtains, and my father was already in the next room, examining a carved crucifix. The room was virtually empty for a few minutes. Breathing with suppressed emotion, the Princess approached the picture—after a pause of unbroken silence, she beckoned Herr Claudius towards her.

"Was this picture taken for you?" she enquired, panting for breath.

"No, your Highness."

"Then, do you not know to whom it once belonged?"

"It is the only article out of my brother's former dwelling which I appropriated to myself."

"Ah, his house in the Carolinenlust," she said, evidently relieved; "so then, you took it from his own house . . . who painted it? that never came from the brush of our pedantic old Court painter, Krause—he was quite incapable of infusing so much life into the eyes."

She was silent for a moment, and stood with her handkerchief to her lips.

“It could not have been painted long before—before he left us,” she continued in touching tones. “That little silver star, which he wears among his other orders, was instituted by my sister Sidonie about two years before his death, in a joyous mood, at a pic-nic—it bore the device ‘Treu und verschwiegen,’\* and naturally had no other value in the eyes of him who wore it than the remembrance of an hour pleasantly spent. . . .”

Silence once more, broken this time by a faint rustling of the curtains.

“Strange,” said the Princess, looking up suddenly. “Claudius never wore rings; people used to say it was from vanity, that the unequalled beauty of his hand might not be eclipsed, and there—look there at the small circlet of gold on his finger . . . I knew that hand well, I have seen it so often, and up to that awful moment, always without that peculiar—simple ring—why is it *there*? . . . It looks like . . . a wedding-ring.”

Herr Claudius made no answer—his delicate lips, which were always tightly shut, as is frequently the case with thoughtful people, shewed a still thinner line than usual; did he notice that Char-

\* “Faithful and secret.”

lotte's eyes as well as mine were actually glaring at him?

"Dear, dear, where was my imagination carrying me?" said the Princess after a short pause, with a melancholy smile. "He was never even engaged,—the whole world knows that . . . at the same time, tell me, did no one claim the picture after his death?"

"Your Highness, there was nobody, except myself, who had any claim to anything belonging to Lothar."

What was that? . . . The answer was so utterly free from all embarrassment, it bore such unmistakable evidence of the sternest reality, that not a doubt remained. Charlotte looked from behind the curtain with all the tokens of mortal terror. Evidently she had received the same impression as I had. Dagobert alone measured his uncle with a long contemptuous glance, and a malicious smile curled his lips,—he was sure of his story, he was unalterably convinced that the man yonder had lied —which of the two were wrong? I still wished the brother and sister to be victorious; but I was also of opinion, that never again could I believe any man, should it prove true, that such a person as Herr Claudius had brought himself to stoop to such a low deception.

The two who had been sent on the wild goose chase for the smelling-bottle came back shrugging their shoulders, and with empty hands. The bottle was finally discovered in the Princess's pocket, who had by this time resumed her usual dignified bearing. Only upon her cheeks, usually tinged with but the faintest tinge of rose, still lingered a deep purple flush.

Fräulein von Wildenspring anxiously related that the sky was overcast with black clouds, indicating an approaching storm, in which she was confirmed by the increasing darkness of the rooms. The Princess, however, seated herself notwithstanding, and partook of some of the delicious fruit which Fräulein Fliedner offered her in a silver basket. Those present formed in a group around her, my father alone was absent; in one of the most distant chambers upstairs, he was wandering about, examining one piece of furniture after another,—he appeared to have forgotten entirely who he had come with, and he was left to himself amid many smiles.

I felt so strange and broken-hearted that I should not have cared had the whole ceiling fallen down into the sultry room; nor should I have felt surprised at such an impossibility occurring, as that of the handsome Lothar stepping down from his

frame into the midst of the assembled company. How expressive were his eyes, and how warm and life-like that hand, "unrivalled in its beauty," which bore the simple ring so fraught with mighty consequences!

Perhaps the Princess noticed these uneasy thoughts flitting across my face, for she beckoned to me.

"My child, you must not be so sad," she said, gently and kindly, while I, abashed by the gaze of so many eyes all centred on me, sank involuntarily on my knees at her side—I had often done so with Ilse. She laid her hand on my head, and bent it down. "Haideprinzesschen! how pretty that sounds... but you are no real child of the Northern Haide, with your little brown face and small oriental shaped nose, your dark refractory locks, and shy defiance in your every feature and motion—far more do you resemble a Princess of the steppes, before whose feet the stolen treasures are nightly poured, and who decks herself with costly pearls from the East. . . . Ah! look how right I was!" She smiled, and took up the pearl necklace which had fallen down on my bosom; for one moment she allowed them to pass through her fingers in amazement. "But these are really the very finest pearls which you are wearing," she said in great

admiration. "Are they your own property, and who gave you this string of such exquisite rarity?"

"My grandmother."

"Your father's mother? . . . oh yes, if I don't mistake she was an Olderode, one of that wealthy and very ancient race—was she not, my child?"

A movement just above the Princess's head caused me to look up—there stood Dagobert, with uplifted finger, and his eye met mine with a magnetic and piercing expression, "say nothing," was the meaning of his whole bearing. Like a kind of dream it recurred to me that he had warned me once already; but at that hideous moment I could neither find time nor power to think "why?" Under the influence of that look, and in a state of utter confusion, I stammered: "I don't know."

What had I done? As I uttered the last word, the spell was broken, and horror seized me at the sound of my own deceitful voice. . . . What? I had actually admitted, before all those people, that I didn't know if my grandmother was or was not descended from the wealthy and ancient house of Olderode? What a lie! I knew, as well as I knew my own name, that she had been a Jacobsohn,—I saw her die in the Jewish faith, and had been her last comfort. . . . What object could I have had in

this positive denial of the truth? I had spoken almost mechanically under strange influences, and only felt with the deepest sorrow that I should be ashamed all my life long of that moment . . . and though everybody—even Dagobert—nodded applause, what then? There was one who judged me severely—he looked at me with undisguised amazement, turned away and left the room—that was Herr Claudius.

I struggled with myself, but didn't find the courage to atone for my fault by at once confessing it. Shame and the fear of making myself ridiculous sealed my lips; and the momentary silence which followed my answer was soon broken,—the first burst of the storm came sweeping through the street, and raised a stifling whirlwind, which blew the withered stalks and leaves and the grey dust of the pavement against the windows. It struck the weather-cock yonder, and a deep yellow flash of lightning shot in—it shone on the window-panes of the opposite houses with a blinding glare, and threw a pale and flickering reflection on the walls and contents of our half-dark drawing-room.

The Princess rose as everyone hastened to the window in alarm; even my father looked up from his interesting researches, and hurried towards us. In my state of calm despair I saw everything that

passed around me like one in a dream. I saw Herr Claudius return into the room, looking just as unmoved in every way as usual; but just at that moment I discovered why the Princess looked at him so fixedly whenever he addressed her—it was because the self-same light shone in his eyes as in the picture yonder; that light which she had described as “the soul,” and which the pedantic old Court painter could never have caught. She took his arm, and let him lead her downstairs. I followed mechanically beside Fräulein Fliedner; her gentle glance was somewhat cold and distant as it met mine—ah yes, had she not also been a witness of the warning I had received from Dagobert in the greenhouse? and now she saw the black stain of a lie upon my brow. I bit my lip and passed out. The ladies’ silken trains came rustling downstairs, and the Princess’s soft sweet voice was occasionally heard between. . . . I thought I had never before heard her speaking in such gentle, heartfelt tones... she was assuring Herr Claudius that she would come again to visit that interesting patriarchal mansion. Fräulein von Wildenspring and the Chamberlain laid their heads together at this announcement; then the impertinent young maid of honour gathered her train up on her arm, and cast suspicious looks at the steps, while Herr von Wismar waved his

handkerchief in the air,—precisely as Dagobert had done that time on the hill,—as a protest against the Princess's intention, which they did not venture to show more openly. Charlotte was walking behind them; I saw sideways how the colour rose to her cheek, and what an expression of intense anger curled her lips—but even that failed for the moment to touch me. I was suddenly awakened from the stupor which had taken possession of me.

“Bravo!” was whispered in my ear. “Haide-prinzesschen bore herself bravely,—now I am quite at ease with regard to my secret,” and Dagobert bent so close and so confidentially towards me, that I felt his breath upon me. . . . Had I suddenly received some malicious, painful blow, it could not have irritated me more than that whisper. I felt hatred towards those brown eyes laughing at me—*they* had lured me to the thoughtless act, and the warm breath which I felt upon my very cheek, offended and incensed me—that was no longer the man for whose sake I would gladly undergo any punishment—he was false, that handsome Tancred, and his beautiful chestnut locks were like serpents hanging in rings from his forehead. Unable to control myself, I tried to hit him, then, rushing madly downstairs, I took my father's arm, who had just reached the last step beside the Princess.

"See, see, my child, we are not now in the Haide!" said he gently reproving me for my boisterous demeanour. The Court satellites had sprung to one side alarmed, as I brushed past them, and even the Princess looked round, somewhat surprised at the noise.

"Oh, you must not scold the little wild bird, Doctor," she said, kindly. "Let us only rejoice that her natural gaiety has returned so quickly, and dispelled the sorrow of parting."

It was enough to throw one into despair—my utter disgust now seemed simply like childish impetuosity, and Herr Claudius would think so too—he did not even look at my small person however, he seemed to have forgotten my existence—well, it was quite right; I had merited that punishment well. . . .

#### XXIV.

THE air in the hall was heavy, laden with the concentrated perfume of the flower-beds outside, which the sultriness of the atmosphere had intensified. As yet, not one drop of rain had fallen to cool the thirsty ground; but on the stone pavement in the yard, little splinters of wood and scraps of paper were strewed about in rows, here and there,

and the poplars by the river were shedding their smooth leaves by thousands—the tempest was gathering force for a fresh burst.

The Princess stepped hastily into her carriage, which had just driven up from the next street, and my father who was summoned to the Prince accompanied her. To Herr Claudius she once more gave her hand, Charlotte and Dagobert on the other hand received a kind and elegant bow, for which they gratefully bent to the earth in return. In the hurry-skurry my little person was quite overlooked—and it was quite right so, for I turned my back on them all, and crossing the yard, opened the garden gate. I had some trouble in keeping my feet,—the storm was raging anew, and broke over the large plot. It seized me fiercely, and tore the gate out of my hands; gathering all my strength together, I once more got hold of it, and banged it after me—it was never allowed to remain open, according to the strict rules of the house.

Now forwards. I staggered a few steps further, struggling for breath, and felt as if I had been suddenly plunged amid swelling waves. . . . How that coloured sea of flowers was, as it were, flooding the earth! how it rose and fell! how it sometimes shewed nothing but the pale green of the stalks and leaves, and then burst afresh into its gaudy splen-

dour! And how the tall, elegant Italian poplars shivered and shimmered in the storm, yielding and bending their light forms to the blast!

All at once the ground went from under my feet; then I found myself in the midst of a bed of heliotropes, and lastly I was thrown against the garden wall. Catching hold of the projecting stones with outstretched arms, I clung to the wall, leaning my head against it, and thus allowed the might of the tempest to pass over me. I looked shyly from beneath the dishevelled locks which flew in my face, for the gate near me creaked and opened, and Herr Claudius entered—he turned his head in every direction,—and finally discovered me.

“Ah, the storm has blown her there,” he exclaimed, immediately coming to my relief; not a hair of mine did the wind raise from that time.

“Really, just like an unfortunate little swallow, that had been thrown out of its nest!” laughed Dagobert, who had followed, and was now supporting himself by clinging to the pillars of the gate.

I let my arms fall quickly from the wall, and turned my head away—that was just the laugh which had hunted me through the Haide under the Dierkhof’s roof.

“Come back to the other house; you cannot

reach the Carolinenlust," said Herr Claudius gently to me.

I shook my head.

"Well, then, I will go with you,—unaided it would be impossible for you to keep your feet."

"My plaidie  
I'd shelter thee,"

rang through my excited mind. No, I would not have either; for him with falsehood on his brow I loathed, and before him who was so patient and kind with me I felt both shame and terror.

"I need no mantle to protect me—I will battle through alone," I said in a suppressed voice, and looking up at him, but through trembling, sparkling tears, which with all my efforts I was unable to repress. My teeth chattered as if I had the ague.

Herr Claudius looked at me, Dagobert laughing meanwhile; a peculiar expression came over his face. "You are ill," he said in a low voice, bending over me. "I dare not leave you alone now; be good, and go with me."

This inexhaustible patience and thoughtfulness for an unworthy little being whom he must thoroughly despise, and who, despite everything, maintained her wilful demeanour, broke down my obstinacy; the raging of the wind also was beginning to subside, and feeling quite able now to keep my feet, I quitted my retreat.

Dagobert was still standing at the gate. The few words Herr Claudius had addressed to me in that low tone, and my sudden consent to go with him, had evidently awakened his mistrust—he laid one finger warningly on his lips, and the other hand he shook at me menacingly. He then returned into the yard, and shut the gate. . . . Unnecessary warning! not a word would escape my lips. First to lie, and then be guilty of treachery . . . Herr Claudius himself would have detested me, even if my communications had been of the utmost importance to him . . . but I could not help thinking at the same time of Heinz's dismal stories of souls that had sold themselves—I was just like such a soul, fluttering hither and thither, unable to find rest.

We reached the nearest conservatory with a few rapid strides; I was not once compelled to avail myself of my companion's protection—my clothes, indeed, blew wildly about me, but still I was able to keep my feet the whole time. All at once a long continued and awful flash of red lightning struck the tops of the rustling poplars; immediately after, a deafening peal of thunder rolled through the air, and the first drops of rain fell thick and heavy against the panes of glass. . . . We entered hastily, and took up our place in the midst of the tall foreign

plants which, unassailable by the fury without, stood there calm and still.

I looked up sideways at my silent companion; he stood equally isolated in the midst of human tumult—was it really because he concealed dark secrets within his breast?

He had caught my glance, and looked enquiringly into my face. “The rapid movement has brought back the colour to your lips,” he said. “Are you better?”

“I am not ill,” I replied, looking down.

“No, but dreadfully excited, and your nerves shaken,” he added. “No wonder, it is the change of atmosphere,—no young soul ever exchanges the quiet solitude, where temptations to evil are rare, for the world’s society, with impunity.”

I understood him perfectly—how gently he judged my offence! Yesterday I should have thought it was because he deceived the world himself—now, I could not think that any longer.

“I should like so much to make this transition easier to you,” he went on. “Yonder, in the salon, a short time ago I said to myself the only means of effecting that would be to send you as quickly as possible out of my own house, but I am not infallible in my judgment; I may err too as to the hands in which I would place your weal and woe.”

"I won't go either," I said, interrupting him. "Do you think I would have remained here an hour longer, after the torture of parting? I should have followed Ilse on foot to the Haide . . . only . . . I must stay with my father. . . . I know quite well that the child belongs to the father; and he wants me . . . ignorant and childish as I am, still he has become accustomed to me."

He looked at me with surprise. "You have more strength of will than I thought—it takes a great deal to bring a nature which has grown up perfectly free and uncontrolled under the sway of duty. . . . Good! then we will abandon the idea; it only occurred to me in an evil moment, full of depressing fears,—that moment when I saw you stumbling . . ."

At these words he turned away, and busied himself so completely in giving a new direction to one of the magnificent blossoms which was pressing against one of the panes, that he appeared to be entirely absorbed in the occupation. He appeared unconscious that I buried my face in my hands, to hide the glow of shame which rose there.

"You have no confidence in me, that is, it is systematically rubbed out of you; for you certainly did not bring the slightest mistrust of the world or mankind here with you," he continued with deep

gravity. "I have found it difficult in your case to assume the roll of the faithful Eckhardt, whose lot it was to warn men against attractive sins—and was in consequence rarely loved . . . but that shall not prevent my entering on my duty this very hour. Perhaps, when your knowledge of the world becomes more extended, perhaps, you will then see that mine was a faithful hand, stretched forth almost in a parental sense, to guard the child from knocking its head against the corners . . . and this hope shall suffice . . . don't count the grains of sand, though, so busily, as they lie at your feet," said he, suddenly interrupting himself. "Won't you look up just once? I should like to know what you are thinking."

"I am thinking that you will prevent my intercourse with Charlotte," I replied, suddenly looking up.

"Not quite,—under my own eyes, or in Fräulein Fliedner's society, you may meet her as often as you like. But I earnestly implore you to avoid being alone with her, as far as possible. As I have already told you, her head is filled with unhealthy fancies, and I may not permit you to be infected with similar nonsense . . . this very day only was I witness to the rapidity with which a pure and guileless human soul becomes the prey of such influences . . . promise me you will obey me." Forgetting himself, he stretched out his hand.

"I *cannot* do that," I exclaimed, while he, turning pale, withdrew his hand in sudden terror. "I feel hot and nervous in this sultry atmosphere"—and really my heart was beating to suffocation. "See, the rain is beginning to moderate . . . I have the shelter of the trees up to the Carolinenlust; let me go out."

With these words I bounded out, along the river's bank; the weather was worse than ever; in a moment I was deluged with rain. I held my hand before my eyes to shelter myself from rushing blindly against the trees, or into the river, and never paused till I reached the hall of the Carolinenlust. . . . Thank God, I no longer heard that gentle voice that in spite of everything touched me, as though a warm living heart beat within.

I threw off my saturated muslin dress, slipped into the despised black frock, and threw open the shutters. I was totally alone in the large house; outside in one corner the poultry, whom the storm had driven all together, were screaming and chuckling together . . . cowering into a corner, I undid the pearls from my neck. With fearful lifelike power did I again behold my grandmother's half-closed eyes, and once more hear her failing voice say: "Ilse, lay the string round the little brown throat," and then to me: "they suit your face, my child;

you have your mother's eyes, but the Jacobsohn features." The name which I this day pretended ignorance of, was actually written on my face—was there a more deceitful, faithless being on the face of the earth than myself?—What road was I going? How often, during the last few weeks, had I allowed myself to be betrayed into acting wrongly and foolishly. But I would grow good again—I pressed the pearls with inward enthusiasm to my lips—and would never again rush blindly into anything, without enquiring who might be hurt thereby.

Outside, the storm and rain were raging on—it seemed as if two tempests were engaged in battle in the air. . . . Suddenly, to my great terror, I saw two forms approaching from the bosquet, and running towards the house—it was the brother and sister.

"There, child, that is the way one must struggle through, if they would seek traces of their fortune," said Charlotte, entering, out of breath. She threw her umbrella, which was broken to pieces, into one corner of the room, her dripping shawl upon the sofa, and began to dry her face and hair with her pocket handkerchief.

"At last," she exclaimed; "we had to stay there, stretched on the rack, as long as Uncle Eric remained in the garden. . . . Now he is settled in his office,

and Eckhof with him, to whom, in accordance with your wish, we have not told that you are our confidante,—your papa is at the castle, nothing could be more fortunate—we are lords of the soil. Forward then!"

"Now?" I cried, shuddering. "It must be enough to frighten one to death up there, now."

Dagobert broke into a loud laugh, but Charlotte grew crimson, and stamped at me with her foot.

"For goodness's sake, don't be such a coward," she exclaimed, violently; "I am dying with impatience, and you go on with such fooleries . . . do you really think I would go patiently and quietly to bed after waiting all this time for that Ilse to be gone, whom I thought we never should get rid of; indeed, that I would wait till evening came, without settling the doubt Uncle Eric infused into my mind to-day?—I should die of the beating of my heart . . . and in addition to that, Dagobert joins his regiment to-morrow; . . . he must first have convincing proofs. Not a moment's delay will we allow you. Keep your word. Forwards! forwards, child!"

She seized me by the shoulder, and shook me. Hitherto I had regarded the handsome girl with a timid love and admiration; now I began to fear her, and her style and manner of speaking of Ilse thoroughly disgusted me; I remained quite still, how-

ever, for I had slipped my own head into the noose, and could not draw it out again. Silently I opened the door of my bedroom, and pointed to the press.

“Move it away!” inquired Charlotte, understanding me at once.

I assented, and almost at the same moment the brother and sister had seized the piece of furniture and pushed it aside . . . the door was disclosed to view . . . Charlotte opened it, and went up the steps. She stood motionless for one moment, and turning very pale, pressed her hand to her heart, as though she would choke in the very act—then she flew up, and Dagobert and I followed.

I was right—it was terribly gloomy up there. The tempest was raging furiously around that very corner, as though it would carry it away, and with it destroy every hidden vestige and record of those mysterious circumstances about to be brought to light. Behind the rose-coloured blinds we could hear the unwearied foaming of the water; even the deceptive light shed by the pink draperies was overcome by the outward gloom.

To open the door, enter and seize the mantle which hung over the partition, was to Charlotte the work of a moment; she took it down from the nail and spread it out.

“It is a domino, which might belong to a gentle-

man, just as well as to a lady," said she dejectedly, and letting it fall on the carpet. . . . Slightly shrugging her shoulders, she proceeded to examine the dressing-table apparatus with evident anxiety. "Pomade, and *poudre de riz*, with several bottles of some fine wash," said she, blowing away the thick coating of dust. "Just the way the toilet-table of a handsome young officer, adored by the ladies, would look; isn't it, Dagobert? The handsome Lôthar was vain as any lady. If you have no better proof to adduce, child, things look badly," said she to me, looking back over her shoulder in apparent calm; but I saw something glimmering in her eyes which filled me still with a kind of pity,—it was deadly anxiety and the deepest dejection.

Suddenly she uttered a tremulous cry, then one of victory, which rang through me. She stretched out her arms, rushed through an open door of an adjoining apartment, and threw herself upon the basket, which stood near the bed, under a canopy.

"Our cradle, Dagobert, our cradle. Oh, heaven!" she exclaimed, while her brother sprang to one of the windows, and drew back the curtain. Pale and flickering shone the daylight on the tiny faded pillow, where Charlotte had hidden her face.

"It is true, all true, every iota," she murmured, raising herself. "I bless the woman in her grave

who listened. . . . Dagobert, here did our royal mother hear our first cry! Our royal mother, the proud daughter of the Duke of K., how bewitching that sounds, and it throws into the shade those aristocrats who have turned up their noses at the merchant's adopted children. . . . Oh, I am overcome with joy!" she exclaimed, interrupting herself suddenly, and pressing her hands to her forehead. "Our cruel enemy, he in the shop yonder, was quite right, when he told me lately I must first learn to bear the truth! I am dazzled."

"For my sake, then, cease this blustering," said Dagobert, in a tone of annoyance and vexation, letting the curtain fall again over the window . . . "let us have a little reason now; this extravagant demeanour is quite incomprehensible . . . such proofs were quite unnecessary to convince me, I was fully satisfied with old Eckhof's information, and, it too, was but the ray of light which fully awoke the inward conviction which our own hearts, our own blood, had already given us."

Charlotte spread the green veil once more tenderly over the little bed.

"Thank God for this mental peace," she said, more composed. "My sceptical brain has given me trouble during the last few days. . . . Oh, you dear innocent!" she said, laughing in a jeering tone at

me; "you prattled to me about specimens of a lady's handwriting, and a woman's cloak, which would have formed but sorry kind of proofs, and this room, with all its important details, escaped your silly eye! . . . Are you then really so awfully—harmless? . . . With one word you could have spared me all the martyrdom I have lately endured."

I scarcely heeded this scornful sarcastic voice. I was thinking regretfully of the pathetic description which Eckhof had insensibly depicted of those who had once inhabited the now sealed chambers. Everything belonging to the secret which two long departed souls had shared was now being raked up ruthlessly, the sheltering dust blown away . . . how anxiously had this secret been guarded! Even the Princess's sister knew nothing of it . . . who then could tell but that those two had ardently desired that even in death the veil should remain drawn? . . . they both lay in their grave now; the beautiful Princess and the poor man with that stain on his handsome brow; neither could keep off strange hands and eyes . . . unless, indeed, they were permitted to return and give warnings, as the gloomy fanatic had said. Awfully alive in very deed were now those chambers, where I had seen naught save the noiseless sunbeams playing and dancing about. Yes, outside the tempest was indeed thundering

against the walls like a battering ram, but inside it seemed to expire in faint groans at the ceiling. The loose curtains became gradually inflated with wind, and rustled like a woman's dress along the floor; here and there a pale streak of light crept in, faintly lighting up the violet bed-curtains and the grim shadows in the corners—like a phantom doomed to wander midway between heaven and earth. . . .

It was very daring to select this hour of terrible tumult for violating in secret the carefully guarded relics of a dead man—so I thought, with anxious, beating heart; but I held my tongue—what could my poor voice effect in the face of such passion? and—now the right word for Charlotte's extravagant bearing occurred to me—against this *eagerness* for a higher position and distinction.

They both stood before the writing-table which I had so sternly respected that I had scarcely ventured to breathe over it,—now every single thing upon it was tossed hither and thither with the speed of lightning.

“Here are mamma's arms on a seal, writing-materials, and sheets of paper,” said Charlotte, her voice still quivering, but all her usual proud calm and self-reliance once more evident in her demeanour. “And there various old letters.”—She drew out the envelopes from beneath a paper-weight.—“To her

Highness the Princess Sidonie von K., Lucerne.' See there, Dagobert, everyone of these letters have been in Switzerland; they all bear the post-mark. A confidante of mamma's must, no doubt, have been always on the road in her stead, received the letters, and conveyed them secretly to the Carolinenlust."

Dagobert returned no answer. He was rattling at the lock of the table—the key was wanting—but according to Eckhof's statements its drawer contained Lothar's pocket-book with the necessary documents, tightly and hopelessly shut in. Shrugging his shoulders, and with a gloomy brow, Dagobert turned away, pulled back one of the curtains, and surveyed the state of the weather; while Charlotte, throwing the envelopes carelessly on the table, walked to the other end of the room. There stood a piano—in my late rapid flight I had not remarked it. Charlotte opened it at once, and struck chords which ought perhaps never again to have been heard—*they* at all events resisted, *they* had voices, and fearfully discordant ones: accompanied by the clang of broken strings, they vibrated in such shrill tones against the walls of the room, that even Charlotte's strong nerves gave way, and shrinking back, she closed the lid of the instrument. She was terrified; but of that palpitating shyness, that feeling of tender reverence with which my thoughts invested

every lifeless object with a kind of feeling, of these not a single trace appeared to animate her. She seized the music which lay on the piano, and foraged among it, till she suddenly shrieked once more, in a half-suppressed, but still triumphant voice "*Gia la luna in mezzo al mare;*" it resounded through the room.

"Dagobert, there it is, what mamma sang in Madame Godin's salon, here it is—here," and she threw the music up in the air. I observed that her brother did not answer, and turned round. He was standing with his back to us, hanging over the writing-table. In a few rapid steps I stood beside him.

"You must not do that," I said. I was frightened at the sound of my own voice, it was so toneless and quivering; in spite of that, however, I looked him courageously in the face.

"Ah, what must I not do?" he demanded, mockingly, at the same time letting fall his hands, in which he held an instrument.

"Break the lock," I replied. "It is my fault that you are here, behind the seals; I guided you here—it is a grave fault, I am very well aware of that. . . . More, however, must not be done,—I will not allow it," I burst out, as I saw him again raise his hand.

"Indeed?" he replied, laughing. It was strange, but his eyes wandered over me, and kindled into light such as I had never yet seen in them. "And how will you prevent it, you little fragile, quick-silver creature?" he enquired, putting the instrument at once into the lock. I heard it creaking and cracking in it. Nervous, but at the same time angry, I seized his arm with both my hands, and tried to pull him away. At that moment I was seized round my waist and held tightly, while Dagobert whispered in my ear: "Little wild cat, don't touch me, or look at me that way,—it is dangerous for you. Your fascinating eyes undid me from the very first. Just your wild mischief attracts me, and if you try to hit me again, as you did on the stairs to-day, then it is all up with you—charming, slippery, little lizard."

I screamed aloud, and he let me go.

"What nonsense are you going on with there, Dagobert," said Charlotte, hurrying over. "Leave the child alone, I beg. You must not play off any of your lieutenant's tricks on her. Lenore is under my protection, and there is an end of that . . . moreover, the little innocent is quite right. What we find locked up here, we have no business to open by force. And of what use would the documents be to us, if we had to acknowledge that we

had obtained them like rogues from behind those legal seals. They are even out of Uncle Eric's reach, on account of his having had the doors sealed, and we do not require to see them. As surely as I breathe, so surely do I know now that we were born here, that we are standing in our parents' house, on our own lawfully inherited territory," she said, solemnly. "Do you hear? The storm is saying 'Amen.'"

Yes, there was a clap that made the very ground shake beneath our feet, and which burst open the glass door that I had but slammed to, without properly shutting, when lately there, deluging the writing-table with rain in one moment.

"Ha, ha, it says Amen, and points out the way we should proceed at the same time," said Dagobert, laughing and shutting the door. "It does not touch this writing-table with a gloved hand, its motto is 'Might against Might.' If matters are to go on as you and Eckhof advise, then I must go on, begging every groschen from uncle, and listening to his reproofs about my debts, till my hair is grey; and you will grow an old maid in the same detested dependence."

"That I shall be in any case," she said, a slight pallor spreading over her face; "I would never marry beneath me,—but these Court fools, on the other

hand, are detestable to me. . . so I will not *love* either, I *will* not . . . I have quite another object in view—I intend to become the head of a Chapter; there, many a one who has trodden me down, will come under my jurisdiction—let them take care of themselves. Besides, I don't understand you, Dagobert," she continued, after taking a long breath. "We settled long ago that matters are not to be brought to a crisis till you return here in January; that we will meantime keep silence, and collect all the evidence we can. I shall find it hard enough to hold out here alone,—it costs me already the deepest self-control to look in uncle's face, and to refrain from saying to him, 'Deceiver, that you are!' and to associate with Fliedner, who always looks so peaceful and innocent, while she is systematically helping to rob us—the wicked old cat! and I really liked her—it is almost too much for me, but it cannot be helped, it must be borne. Eckhof is right in exhorting us to the utmost possible care and caution."

She wiped the wet up off the table, and closed the box fast again.

What she did, or did not do, however, no longer attracted my attention. I had taken up my position between the glass door and the writing-table, and stood sentry there. . . . I fancied

the shaking of the ground continued, but it was in my own feet. Never in all my life had I felt as I did at that moment, when I seemed suddenly as if in iron bands. Had I been cast down the darkest abyss, I could not have felt more terrified than at the sound of that warm whisper from a half-stifled voice. . . . the words, indeed, were but half intelligible to me, yet they sent the blood to my cheeks and temples . . . had I followed my own wish, I should have left everything behind me and run off as far as my feet would carry me; but the fear that the writing-table might then, in spite of all, be broken open, held me back.

"Those are our arms, little one,—look at them," said Charlotte, at last coming over to me again. She held a signet ring with a cut stone in it towards me. "Papa, indeed, never wore rings, as Her Highness affirmed to-day, nevertheless this one exists, and has evidently been often used as a seal—it lay among papa's writing materials; I will take it with me; the only thing I will claim beforehand." She slipped the ring into her pocket. I was released. We went back, and the press was pushed back into its place.

As the lawful heirs of Freiherr Lothar von Claudius, as indirect branches of the Ducal house, did the brother and sister descend the gloomy staircase,

which Charlotte had ascended still under the torturing influence of doubt.

Clear as day lay the solution of the mystery there—to me also—how then could Herr Claudius with an open brow and firm voice have denied the truth? In spite of all, let the matter be as it might I knew he had *not* told a lie.

## XXV.

CHARLOTTE seized her shawl, but dropped it quickly again in alarm, and running to the window, threw it open.

“What is the matter, Herr Eckhof?” she called out.

The old bookkeeper was running across the gravel path towards the house. He had no hat on, and his face, generally so self-controlled, was deeply agitated. He was evidently much excited.

“There has been a water-spout in Dorotheenthal,” he replied, breathlessly. “At least forty-thousand thalers loss for the Firma Claudius! Everything that we have cherished and tended with so much care for years past out there, is now ruined and destroyed! . . . Do you hear the signals of distress? . . . There must be people in danger too.”

Dorotheenthal was a property belonging to the Claudius family; a very ancient and once noble mansion, which together with the village, lay at the foot of a somewhat narrow valley. The firm carried on its business much more extensively in the demesne of Dorotheenthal than in the gardens at K. The young plantations were entirely confined to that district, and the rare specimens of young pine trees which had been raised there had won for Dorotheenthal a degree of renown. Each peculiar species of flower was sown in fields there, and houses full of ananas, orchids, and cactuses surrounded the house in considerable numbers. A few small lakes and a pretty little river which ran through the valley assisted not a little in the carrying on of this gigantic concern. Now, however, the assistant element had turned into a destroying fiend—the lakes had overflowed, and the river, bursting through a dam, had as Eckhof had announced before he disappeared in the hall, united with them.

“What a misfortune!” exclaimed Charlotte, turning deadly pale, and wringing her hands.

“Nonsense—what are you frightened at?” said Dagobert, shrugging his shoulders. “What are forty thousand thalers to Uncle Eric? He can get over it,—and in any case, what is it to us? That is his affair—our inheritance won’t be a penny the less!...

No doubt he will make wry faces, and what I shall get at my departure the day after to-morrow will be little enough, . . . indeed, on my own account, I should have been better pleased if the business had all been in good order."

The last words were almost lost upon us. Charlotte ran out and I after her . . . people in danger? How dreadful that sounded. I must know more, I could not remain in the Carolinenlust alone. Charlotte had given me her arm, and we ran thus over the foaming river, pelted without intermission by the rain, through the now flooded, dripping garden to the front house.

Here and there we met garden assistants with terrified faces on the way; and in the distance we could already discern the noise of voices calling to each other, as the sound came to us over the yard wall. Nearly all the work people of the establishment were gathered together when we entered the yard, and Herr Claudius's carriage was standing at the door . . . he himself was just coming out equipped in a great coat, and hat in hand . . . it seemed as though a soothing power proceeded from his presence—the noise ceased. He gave some orders; his quiet, dignified movements were in no wise marred by any hurry or fuss—one felt that the fair

head with the grave expression yonder would maintain the mastery in every situation in life.

On our appearance the people stepped back and let us pass; I was still hanging on Charlotte's arm. Just then Herr Claudius observed us crossing the yard—it seemed almost as if he started; a glance as of anger crossed his uncovered brow; he frowned, and from beneath his knitted brow shot a look of slow, reproving disapprobation. . . . I cast down my eyes, and drew my arm away from that of my companion.

"Uncle Eric, that is a severe blow," exclaimed Charlotte, approaching him as he stood at the door.

"Yes," he replied simply, without any further observation. He then turned back into the hall, where Fräulein Fliedner was standing.

"My dear Fliedner, will you see that Fräulein von Sassen gets on dry clothes immediately—I make you responsible for it, mind!" he desired, in his ordinary, calm manner; pointing at the same time to my dirty, wretchedly soaked through satin shoes, and my dripping frock . . . to my face he did not vouchsafe another glance.

He mounted the box rapidly, and seized the reins.

"Take me with you to Dorotheenthal, uncle," said Dagobert, who appeared just then in company

with the bookkeeper, now equipped in hat and cloak.

"There is no room as you may see," replied Herr Claudius curtly, pointing to a number of working men, who with anxious faces mounted after Eckhof—they came from Dorotheenthal.

The carriage rolled off, and Fräulein Fliedner, taking my hand, led me into her own room. Charlotte followed us.

"You are really like a drowned rat," said she to me, as Fräulein Fliedner brought forward dry clothes. "It was most extraordinary that Uncle Eric, with his bartering mind, should at such a moment have observed it."

"You may infer from that that his mind is not given to bartering," replied Fräulein Fliedner. Her gentle face was still pale with terror, and now a bitter, harsh expression crossed her lips. "I have often begged you not to give expression to such hard and unjust remarks in my presence. I really cannot bear them."

"So—but you keep silence, and think it all right when my uncle reads me a lecture, and in his cold, cruel calm manner does not deal very gently with me," she exclaimed hotly. "If he were an old man, to whom respect was due, I could bear it better,—but my pride rebels against this man, with his ardent eye,

who possesses, in comparison with my brother and myself, not so much experience as superior power. He treats us badly!"

"That is not true," replied Fräulein Fliedner, decidedly. "He only seeks to suppress those tendencies which he ought not to suffer . . . of course, when you act independently and indiscreetly, you must be prepared to receive correction, Charlotte, . . . something occurred this very day which you might have avoided. While Herr Claudius was in the conservatory with the Princess, our house carpenter took the measure of every window in your apartments,—he said you had ordered blinds . . ."

"Well, yes, I did—I have borne the sun long enough and patiently, shining in on my unfortunate skin," interrupted Charlotte, sullenly. "There should be blinds on the sunny side—"

"Quite true; but it would have been nothing more than proper to have asked Herr Claudius about it—it is *his* house and *his* money you are thus disposing of."

"Well, the time will *yet* come, when I shall no longer have to listen to the clanking of these chains," cried Charlotte, giving way to her passion.

"Who knows but that then you may one day long for them again," said Fräulein Fliedner, very quietly.

"Do you think so, my good Fliedner?" The mocking scorn in the young girl's voice sounded fearful. "A depressing prognostication! . . . Nevertheless, I am so bold as to hope, indeed, to expect decidedly that Providence has better intentions with regard to me."

She walked towards the door.

"Won't you take tea with me?" asked Fräulein Fliedner, as kindly and gently as though there had not been a bitter word exchanged. "I will prepare it at once—I am responsible for Fräulein von Sassen's health, and must endeavour to avert all possibility of cold."

"No, thank you," replied Charlotte, looking back from the door, and answering coldly; "I wish to be with my brother alone. . . . Send me up the tea-pot, but the little silver one, if you please,—I don't intend to use brass any longer, not even if Dörte makes it shine like gold. . . . Adieu, Prinzesschen!"

She slammed the door to, and hastened upstairs with heavy steps. Almost immediately after harsh chords rang through the hitherto quiet house.

The old lady shrank back. "Oh, how inconsiderate," she murmured to herself. "Every note falls like a blow upon my anxious heart."

"I will go and beg of her to stop," I said, springing to the door.

"No, no, don't do that," she said, holding me back nervously. "That has become her habit when she leaves us in ill-temper, and we always allow her to vent it thus. But to-day, just at this time of anxiety and sorrow,—what must the people in the house think? She seems much more heartless than she really is," she added in a grieved tone. She settled me up deep in the sofa cushions, and began to prepare the tea. At any other time it would have seemed unsociable enough in the old lady's old-fashioned apartment. The tea kettle sang; outside the wind went sighing through the empty streets, and the rain pattered in measured time against the window-panes. The quiet, smiling face in the Pagoda behind the glass nodded contentedly into the darkening room, and the irritable little Pinscher lay lazily, buried in evident comfort on the pillow. . . . Still Fräulein Fliedner's hands trembled as she buttered the bread . . . I could see them . . . and Dörte, the old cook, who just then entered with a plate of baked bread, asked with an anxious sigh, "How are things going on out there, Fräulein Fliedner?"

My heart beat with an inexplicable anxiety. I felt a burning pain every time it occurred to me that Herr Claudius had parted from me in anger . . . and to my own torment, I was forced to think of it

perpetually. How childishly wilful and contradictory I must have appeared to him as I came over, leaning on Charlotte's arm. . . . And notwithstanding all that he had still shown care for me—care for an insignificant little being like me, at such a moment, when he had just met with such a heavy misfortune! . . . my teeth chattered softly, and with a nervous shudder I sunk still deeper into the sofa corner. . . . At Fräulein Fliedner's earnest request I swallowed a cup of hot tea . . . the old lady herself took nothing . . . she sat quietly by me.

"Is Herr Claudius also in danger out there?" at length burst from my lips.

She shrugged her shoulders. "I fear so . . . dangerous it must be . . . water is even worse than fire, and Herr Claudius is not the man to think of himself at such a moment, but he is in God's hand, my child."

That did nothing towards lightening my heart . . . how often had I read of people having been drowned, innocent people who had committed no crime . . . and he had a murder on his conscience! . . . was a murderer also in God's hand. The anxiety I suffered drove me involuntarily to speak out.

"But he is guilty of a man's death," I said, in a suppressed voice, without looking up. The old lady shrank back, and for the first time I observed

an expression of intense disgust flash from her soft eyes.

"Abominable!—who has told you that already, and in such a reckless way?" she said in great excitement. She stood up and went over to the window for a few minutes; then she came back, sat down beside me, and took both my hands in hers.

"Do you know the circumstances about it?" she asked, more composedly.

I shook my head.

"Then your young and inexperienced mind may well form a horrible picture out of it. I can easily fancy that—poor Eric! . . . it is indeed the darkest spot in his life; but, my child, he was a very young man at that time, scarcely one and twenty; a young man of a passionate and enthusiastic temperament;—he loved a lady, loved her so—well, I cannot enter into the details of that with you. He had a friend too, in whom he placed the most perfect confidence, and for whom he had sacrificed much. . . . One day he discovered beyond a doubt that the lady and his friend had both deceived him, that both were false . . . a violent scene took place, and words passed which, in men's opinion, according to the present horrible fashion, can only be wiped out in blood. . . . They fought a duel about the treacherous woman; the friend . . ."

"Young Eckhof," I hastily broke in.

"Yes, the bookkeeper's son . . . a shot lodged in his shoulder, and Herr Claudio's head was a good deal injured . . . the weakness in his eyes is a relic of that time. . . . Eckhof's wound was not dangerous in itself; but his already enfeebled and shattered constitution gave way beneath the blow, and after a few weeks' confinement to a sick bed he died, in spite of every effort on the part of the most celebrated surgeons—"

"And the lady, the lady?" I enquired eagerly.

"The lady, my dear child, had left Paris long before Herr Claudio rose from his sick bed; she went away with an Englishman."

"She was the cause of his sufferings, and never came to crave forgiveness or to nurse him?"

"My little girl, she was an actress—she took this sacrifice of life and health as the homage due to her dangerous charms, and felt in no wise called upon to ask forgiveness, still less to heal the wound her cruelty had dealt. . . . Not long after his recovery Herr Claudio came here . . . (his brother was—dead, and had left many arrangements to be carried out by his heir . . .) I saw him again after a long period of separation, and never in my life have I seen any one suffer like that poor young heart, torn up at its very foundations!"

"Had he remorse of conscience?"

"Not so much that—he could not forget the lady . . . he used to rush through the garden like one deranged, or keep striking chords wildly on the piano . . ."

"The grave, quiet Herr Claudius?" I enquired, breathless with surprise.

"He wasn't so then . . . he sought for calm and soothing in music, and how he played! I can easily understand how Charlotte's 'strumming' must at times torment him . . . he did not remain long here. He wandered another year about the world, without any object; and then he came back once more completely changed, he took his business in hand as the grave, silent, stern man you see him now. . . . I have never heard him strike a note since, never heard a passionate word from his lips, never seen a violent action on his part. He had conquered in a different way to his brother, who sank under his affliction—his strong mind guided him to the real means of cure for mental anguish—work—so he became then, just what he is now, a worker in the strictest sense of the word, a character of steel, who sees in order and activity the healing waters for men's minds, and would willingly see them universally made use of."

Fräulein Fliedner had spoken with an animation

such as I had never yet seen in the old lady, who, though always sweet and amiable, was at the same time very reserved. I sat beside her, gazing with a beating heart into the new world which had been revealed to me. This passionate love of a man for a woman was a marvel to me. My greatest favourites among the fairy tales lost all their charm and brilliancy when placed beside this narrative from real life . . . and that man, who had been unable to forget the faithless lady, who had been chased through the garden like one demented by extreme agony for her loss, that man was Herr Claudius—he could really thus take a thing to heart!

"Does he love the lady still?" I enquired, breaking the sudden silence.

"My child, I cannot answer that," said the old lady, smiling. "Do you really think that anybody knows what goes on in Herr Claudius's mind? You know his face and form, and you yourself call it grave and quiet . . . but his mind is a sealed book to every one . . . besides I can scarcely think it possible; he must now despise the lady."

It had grown dark. Fräulein Fliedner had opened a window previously; the heavy rain had ceased. It was very quiet in the retired Mauerstrasse, but in the distance we could hear the hum of people moving about in the crowded squares towards the centre

of the town. The lamps appeared on the opposite side of the street, one by one . . . they were reflected in the dismal pools on the pavement, and shewed how dark and gloomy the sky still hung over the town . . . their faint glimmer lighted even the room where we sat, close to each other, without uttering a word; and I begged Fräulein Fliedner not to light the lamps . . . there was light enough . . . the fact was, I was afraid to see the old lady's face, for I knew it would look full of anxiety and deep distress.

Just then I heard steps on the footpath, and a voice saying rapidly, as it passed under the open window: "A lame woman, who was unable to save herself, has been drowned . . . they say it is dreadful out there."

We started up, and Fräulein Fliedner began pacing up and down the room . . . we heard talking going on at the same time in the hall.

"Is there no news yet from Dorotheenthal?" enquired Charlotte over the banisters, as Fräulein Fliedner opened the door.

"None of our people are back yet," replied old Erdmann. He was standing among the household servants, and his voice trembled as he spoke. "But other people say it is too awful out there, and our master was the first man to the rescue . . . God have mercy on him! . . . little he cares if the silver

cord is to be loosed for him . . . other people were there too—the Duke, they say, among them."

"What, His Highness himself?" called out Da-gobert.

Erdmann replied in the affirmative. The door upstairs was slammed to; but immediately afterwards the young lieutenant appeared on the stairs . . . he had his horse brought out and galloped off, the young Tancred—how mean he seemed to me now.

I cowered once more in the corner of the sofa, while Fräulein Fliedner took up her place in a window, sighing deeply. I could not help thinking of the water raging over the earth, and suffocating every one unable to save himself. How dreadful it must be to sink beneath the surging waters. But "Herr Claudius cares little if the silver cord be loosed for him"—as old Erdmann had said, he no longer cared either for the world, mankind, or yet his own life; and he was right. The lady whom he could not forget had been false, the brother and sister and the old bookkeeper were all the same, and I to whom he had shewn so much kindness had been but a few hours previously busily employed in bringing crushing proofs to light against him and his mode of acting . . . Fräulein Fliedner alone clung to him, and it was with a sensation of envy that I looked over at the small, delicate form, which

kept ceaseless watch at the window. She had a good conscience, she had never done anything to hurt him, she need not reproach herself, if . . . if the waters were to close for ever over that fair and noble head . . . I very nearly screamed aloud as I thought of this possibility, but I clenched my teeth, and began once more to listen anxiously to every step, to the sound of every wheel.

Thus passed hour after hour. My father had not returned yet either . . . Erdmann had, by Fräulein Fliedner's order, gone over to the Carolinenlust to see . . . the excitement in the town had not yet quite subsided, but it had become considerably quieter . . . it was midnight when a carriage turned into the Mauerstrasse . . . with an exclamation half of alarm, half of joy, the old lady sprang up, and I flew through the hall and tore open the hall-door. A palpable darkness lay over the earth, but heeding it not, I rushed forth to meet the approaching vehicle.

“Is it you yourself, Herr Claudius?” I called out in a trembling voice, above the clatter of the wheels.

“Yes,” sounded from the box.

“God be praised!” . . . I pressed my hands against my breast. I felt as though my now unburthened heart would burst its bounds.

And now the people of the house all came out

and pressed around the carriage. Herr Claudius got down.

"Is it really so bad, sir?" asked old Erdmann of Herr Claudius, "really forty thousand thalers' loss, as Schäfer says?"

"The injury is greater . . . it is a wilderness once more . . . we must begin again from the beginning at Dorotheenthal . . . I am only sorry for my young pines . . . not one left!" he said, moved. "Well, all that can be remedied in time; but here . . ." he stopped and opened the carriage door.

He helped some one carefully down the steps. The light of several lamps now streamed through the yard gate, and fell on a young girl, who, partially supported by Herr Claudius, stepped on the pavement. A spasmodic sob shook the tender, bowed down form, and her uncovered hair fell in disorder over a beautiful but agonized face, in which the sorrow of despair was visible.

"Her mother has been drowned," whispered those who had accompanied them.

Herr Claudius caught her more firmly and led her up the steps. He passed close to me in the dark. His clothes were wet through.

On the top step stood Fräulein Fliedner, stretching out her hands towards him; what he said I did not understand. A sudden shyness and inexplicable

feeling of pain had made me shrink away from the other people . . . but I saw the old lady lay the weeping one's arm gently in her own, and lead her away. Herr Claudius remained a few moments longer above, talking to Charlotte. It did not escape me that he looked searchingly around . . . had he then recognized my voice in the yard after all, and did he want to convince himself that it really had been me, with whom he was so angry? . . . what absurd thoughts! He had something more important to think of now . . . how great the misfortunes he had witnessed to-day, and what weighty affairs now lay on his shoulders! Had he not just led an afflicted orphan girl into his house? . . . led her in with tender care and deep sympathy. She was not ungrateful like me, she did not spurn the hand that sought to support her . . . trustfully had she yielded herself to the arm that upheld her . . . and in the midst of all that was he to remember the wilful Haide child? . . . Certainly not!

He came downstairs again, stood at the door, and gazed into the darkness. Meantime, another gentleman had got out of the carriage, who went to meet him. I recognized my father. In unspeakable amazement I beheld him offer his hand to the despised "Krämer" with the utmost cordiality, and part from him with warm thanks. I joined him in the

garden, and slipped my hand into his arm. He was greatly surprised, and indeed could scarcely bring himself to believe that his little daughter could be up and in the open air at such an hour. He had accompanied the Duke to Dorotheenthal, and then, for shortness, returned in Herr Claudius's carriage.

"What a man!" he exclaimed, standing still. "The Duke is perfectly enchanted with his calm and quietude, and with the dignity with which he meets such an enormous loss. I took the man for a mere arithmetical machine. I must beg his pardon for it."

Yes, what a man, indeed! . . . "Well, all that can be repaired in time, but here . . ." in these few simple words had he placed his own enormous pecuniary loss in comparison with that of the young girl. And that was the niggardly uncle, the cold-blooded miser. . . . No, no, "a worker in the strictest sense of the word," but not merely on account of the gain, but because he saw the means of his mind's healing in order and activity. . . . Ah! I already began to understand him better.

That night I never went to bed. I sat down in a corner of the window and waited for the morning dawn. With that day, which rose so pale behind the trees, I would begin a new life.

## XXVI.

THE following afternoon I took the garden gate key, which had been confided to me, and went over to the Swiss cottage. I knew that Gretchen's father was teacher at the first girl's school in K., and I intended him to be my assistant in becoming another person. No long introduction was requisite. Frau Helldorf recognized me again immediately,—and as I learned later Schäfer, the gardener, had already related plenty of stories about the wild, singular, and so unexpected appearance of the "learned gentleman's" child;—Gretchen threw her arms round my neck. The occurrence in the garden, which had been my fault, was not once mentioned.

"Will you instruct me?" I asked Herr Helldorf, who sat correcting an enormous pile of copy books. "I will learn as much as it is possible to cram into my brains. I am already such a grown up girl, and don't even know how to write. He smiled, and so did his charming little wife, and we forthwith entered into a compact, according to which I was to be free to come and go as a child of the house, and to receive daily at least three hours of solid instruction. I informed Fräulein Fliedner of this compact; she

expressed herself as thoroughly well-satisfied with it, and also undertook at my request to arrange about the payment for my lessons, so that I was not obliged to appear in Herr Claudius's office.

From that time I was unwearied in my application. To be sure the pen was often enough thrown under the table at the commencement; and I fled with burning temples and streaming eyes deep into the wood,—but I always returned nevertheless, though heaving many a sigh, and picking up the small, steel tyrant, wrote on, till the copying gradually ceased, and the firm, fair characters began to flow rapidly over the paper, and became the exponents of thought—then it seemed as if scales fell from my eyes!... To my teacher's great joy I made incredibly rapid progress, and my very limited departments of instruction at the commencement now extended itself to music. Here my own natural taste came to my assistance, and I was soon able to stand by the younger Herr Helldorf at the piano, and sing duets with him.

This intercourse at the Swiss cottage, which my father approved of and which Herr Claudius and Fräulein Fliedner openly encouraged, was looked upon in other quarters with enraged and jealous eyes. Eckhof was outrageous, and Charlotte indignant and spiteful in a way I could not under-

stand. I now learned more about the dispute between the old bookkeeper and his daughter. Helldorf had been a student of Theology, and been, while yet a student, engaged to Anna Eckhof. The old mystic had given his consent, but on condition that the young man should become a missionary when he had completed his studies,—indeed, a missionary formally bound by a written confession of the Lutheran faith,—and go out to the East Indies with his young wife. This clause became gradually more and more oppressive to the young lover, and he finally declared himself utterly opposed to it, and a decided enemy of all pietistical people and their phraseology. In addition to that, the doctor gave it as his opinion that the young girl's constitution was far too delicate to enable her to bear up against the exciting life of a missionary's wife, full too as it must be of privations. This, however, did not affect the old man in the least—he was fanatical enough to think that she would be supported with the requisite strength, and if not, she would go straight to her God, as a true and faithful combatant for holy church . . . he had thrown her off, when Helldorf had remained steadfast in his refusal, and she would not give up the man she had chosen. . . .

I could perfectly well-understand then the old man's ill-humour at the sudden breaking down of

the partition wall between the banished one's home and the territory which he had hitherto appropriated to himself; but what gave rise to Charlotte's enmity against my intercourse with the schoolmaster's family? . . . She repeatedly said to my very face, that she could not understand how Herr Claudius could entrust the key of a door which opened on the high road, in such heedless, childish hands as mine,—one fine day we should find the garden overrun with beggars. She maintained that I had become insufferably insolent since the Nürnberg channel of information had been opened to me; that not a trace of the "simple charming Haide-prinzesschen" remained, and that I had begun all at once to arrange my curls with a degree of art, betokening a striking tendency to coquetry. Still more enraged and embittered was she, however, when the music lessons began. I often met her behind the garden wall, when at the conclusion of the lesson I used to run in there quickly; with flashing eyes, but still always in an indifferent, injured manner, she remarked that the little songstress rejoiced in a very strong throat—she had caught a few notes in passing by; but one Sunday, when my fellow-singer, young Helldorf, accompanied me to the garden gate, she suddenly emerged from the thicket and uttered a peal of laughter, which she

now and then interrupted with a scornful "Allow me to congratulate you, Fräulein von Sassen."

I let it pass, because I really did not understand her demeanour. Otherwise, she commanded herself with regard to the impending secret far better than I had expected. In only two particulars did she allow the increase of her pride to be seen,—in the circumstance of, to Fräulein Fliedner's great annoyance, never appearing at table except in rich silk, and in her contempt for the burgher class. Young Helldorf was the person who felt that most, and Herr Claudius encouraged him more and more in coming to the house. She behaved with such coldness and rudeness to the young man, that it often irritated me, and all the more because a purely fraternal affection had gradually sprung up between and united us in a very beautiful bond. To my great comfort he confronted her pride with equal hauteur—he completely ignored the haughty lady. I was often a witness of this, as I now very frequently joined the little circle at Herr Claudius's tea-table; and always accompanied indeed by my father. A tolerably frequent intercourse now took place between Herr Claudius and him. The former often came into the library, a thing he had never done formerly; and my father often went into the room arranged as an observatory. At tea they

always sat by each other, and seemed to understand each other very well; but they never—no matter when I happened to listen to them—touched on the subject of the medal. . . . My position, however, with regard to Herr Claudius was not altered in consequence of this intercourse. On the contrary, I kept myself more decidedly and anxiously out of his way than ever;—that secret, with which I was acquainted, stood between us. At Dagobert's return in January they were to take the opportunity for a disclosure—were I in the meantime to seem friendly or even to court his notice, how false I should then seem, when his eyes were once opened. . . . And yet another thing made me shrink from his presence. Often, when I was engaged in conversation with others, if I suddenly looked up, I met his eye fixed upon me in a kind of melancholy; I knew too well why—he saw the lie, that stained my youthful brow. That brought the blood to my cheek and wakened up anew the hideous stubbornness of evil. . . . He took my repulsive demeanour as something which he had never expected to be different. He never alluded to the guardianship with which Ilse had entrusted him, although I was well aware that he kept incessant watch over my every act, and had actually put himself privately in connection with the teacher whom I had myself selected—he kept his promise

to Ilse faithfully, irksome and burhensome as it must in time have become. A sudden terror often overcame me as I looked at him surrounded by his guests, he himself seated in their midst in his own gentle gravity and calm bearing . . . and then saw the impending secret hanging over his head in the air . . . how would he come out of all these discoveries?

Three months passed thus. I looked with pride at the firm, fine characters of my own handwriting, into which I could now infuse mind also. I had already entered into a correspondence, and that a secret one, with my aunt Christine. She had thanked me for sending her the money in almost exaggerated language, and informed me that she had put herself into the hands of a physician at Dresden, who gave her every hope that her voice would be restored. According to her assurances I had saved her, had been her guardian angel, and was the only being that still had sympathy with a poor, deeply tried woman. She again expressed the strongest desire to be able sometime or other to embrace me. This correspondence terrified me in the highest degree, especially since I had ventured timidly one day to mention this unfortunate aunt to my father. He started up and forbid me ever to do so again, remarking at the same time angrily, that he could not

understand how Ilse could have allowed such a piece of family misfortune to reach my ears . . . her ever more and more frequent letters caused me consequently the deepest anxiety; still I could not find it in my heart to leave them unnoticed.

But other cares also came upon me. I, who but a few months previously did not even know what money was, now counted every penny with anxiety, for—they were sorely wanted. I had undertaken to manage our little household with no small pleasure, and also not without some cleverness; every evening I arranged a pretty little tea-table in the library, a comfort my father had not experienced for many a long day; but that this must all be paid for, I was utterly ignorant, till the maid one day brought me a long bill for the outlay.

“Money?” exclaimed my father, looking up from his papers in alarm as I unsuspiciously handed him the bill. “My child, I don’t understand—what for then?” He searched in his waistcoat pockets and in his coat. “I have none, Lorchen,” he explained, shrugging his shoulders, and in helpless embarrassment. “How is it then—haven’t I paid the subscription to the hotel quite lately?”

“Yes, papa, but this is for the little outlay on supper,” I stammered.

“Ah, so.” He pulled his hair with both hands.

“Yes, my child, that is something quite new to me. I never took any . . . there,” he said, searching in his pocket for a paper containing sugar stick, “that is very nourishing and wholesome.”

Oh, how I started and how my eyes were opened all at once!—

My father had a considerable income, but denied himself things absolutely necessary for the sake of his collections. Hence that awfully emaciated face, which under Ilse’s care and mine had already begun to assume a more healthy appearance. Even if I had wished it, I dared not for his own sake have consented to this singular sugar diet; but the courage failed me entirely to come forward now with any further request, when I saw that he would give hundreds for some discoloured manuscript or majolica vase, and never think whether it left him a farthing remaining. His gentle, loveable nature, the almost childlike delight with which he showed me his newly acquired treasures, and the deep respect I felt for his knowledge and vocation, all tended to keep my mouth shut.

I sought out the little purse which Ilse had left in the trunk “in case of necessity,” and which I had hitherto overlooked. Its contents sufficed for a time; but now, with the last penny, care came once more. I dare not apply to Ilse with a request of that nature,

nor to Herr Claudius either; I should be obliged to tell him on every occasion to what purpose the money I thus drew was to be devoted. I also remembered, now that I was becoming a better judge of mankind and of circumstances, that he had sternly reprobated these very collections as soon as any such taste degenerated into a passion. I understood his expression that "such collectors would take the very bread from off the altar" much better now, and dared not expect, therefore, that he would yield to my request. But over what *I myself might earn*, he would have no right; I should not even need to tell him to what the proceeds were applied—this idea came like a ray of light to my deliverance.

The very day after the accident at Dorotheenthal I had seen the young girl, whose mother had been drowned there, sitting at one of the windows in the back-room, her pretty, pale face was bent so low and her fingers were so busy that I could not succeed in catching a glimpse of her.

"What is she doing?" I had enquired of Fräulein Fliedner.

"She asked for occupation, because she thinks that only in that way will she be able to master her sorrow. She writes the names on the seed packets . . . her father was a schoolmaster in Dorotheenthal . . . and she writes beautifully."

This occurred to me again, when one day Emma, the housemaid, brought me a long list of what I owed once more. I had not another farthing to dispose of, and begged a few days grace from her. Evidently surprised and perplexed, she left the room, and at six o'clock in the evening I went with a beating heart towards the front house . . . it was Herr Claudius's evening for receiving at tea.... My father was also invited, but first he was in attendance at the castle for the purpose of welcoming the Princess Margaret, who had returned that day after an absence of three months.

I left my cloak and hood in Fräulein Fliedner's room.

"My child," said the old lady, looking a little embarrassed, and drawing my head to her breast; "if your cash box should ever run out, you will come to me, will you not?"

I started; Emma had been talking; but I would not confess my embarrassment at that moment at all events. I felt ashamed for my father's sake. And how would it help me either, even were she to lend me the money? It must be repaid all the same . . . so I thanked her warmly, and proceeded with tolerably steady steps towards the office, for the first time since Ilse left.

As I approached I could hear Herr Claudius

walking up and down. As I opened the door, he turned round at the noise, and stood with his hands folded behind him. His was the only table on which there was a lamp burning, and on it there was a green shade; all the other gentlemen had left the office.

A shudder ran through me . . . the tall slight man there had just been pacing up and down the room with hasty strides, . . . and I could not help thinking of the days when a passionate sorrow had made him pace about the garden so restlessly. My appearance in the office seemed to astonish him greatly . . . almost involuntarily he caught the lamp shade and raised it, so as to throw its whole light on my shy, hesitating person as I stood in the doorway. I felt as much pain as if I had suddenly been placed in the pillory; but I gathered all my energies together, walked up to him, and with a slight and very unsuccessful bow laid a paper on the writing-table before him.

“Will you be so kind as to examine this handwriting,” I said, with downcast eyes.

He took up the paper.

“Nice, characteristic writing . . . the characters are firm and steady, look almost as if they were harnessed there, and are yet not wanting in elegance,” he said, as with a slight smile he turned his face

towards me. "One would think the writer had drawn on an iron glove in order to mask a delicate white little hand."

"Then they are nice . . . but are they useful too? . . . I should be glad of it," I said, nervously.

"Ah so, you have a deeper interest in it than I thought. You wrote that yourself?"

"Yes."

"And what do you mean by useful? . . . Is it not enough that you can all at once write so nicely, and . . . one can see it in the writing . . . so rapidly and with so much ease?"

"Oh, no, not nearly," I replied in haste. "I want to write so that . . . that I might be entrusted with work." It was out now and I began to take courage. "I know too, that you allow women to write the names upon the packets of seeds,—will you try me? . . . I will take the greatest trouble and write it exactly after the pattern." I looked up at him, but let my eyes fall again instantly—his blue eyes were fixed with such an ardent, yet sympathetic gaze on my face; they were so glowing with such animation, it was impossible to believe that they belonged to that ordinarily calm, self-possessed being.

"You want to work for money?" he said, however, in his usual quiet, almost business-like tone.

"Did it not occur to you that you do not require to do that? You have means . . . tell me how much you want, and for what purpose?" He laid his hand on the iron safe, which stood near him.

"No, I won't have that," I answered hastily. "Let that money remain for future days; my dear grandmother said it would suffice to keep away want, and I am not in want yet—God forbid!"

He let his hand drop—I don't know why, but his peculiar smile made me fancy he had *also* heard already of Emma's chattering. This made me feel deeply cast down, but at the same time strengthened me in my resolution.

"You have evidently a false idea of the work you want to undertake," he continued. "I know that in five minutes your cheeks would flush, and the thoughts, in your head and your feet beneath the table, would rebel against the detested writing."

"That is different now," I interposed, in a faint voice, and feeling dreadfully ashamed,—he was quoting my own childish words, in which I had formerly described my horror of writing. "I have found it difficult enough, that is true, I don't deny it; nevertheless I have conquered."

"Really?"—that fatal smile again trembled on his lips. "Then you have completely thrown aside all the Haide propensities? You have forsworn

climbing of trees, and can no longer understand that you ever took pleasure in wading through the river?"

"Oh no, *so* cultivated as that I certainly am not," broke forth from me against my will. "And indeed, I cannot think the time will ever come, when I could listen to the rustling of the trees and the murmur of the waters without a yearning—but I shall learn to govern that longing, as I did to form these characters, with clenched teeth,"—I pointed to the paper—"also against my inclination."

He turned away and looked up at the green curtain, as though he were counting every thread. He then took up a little paper packet and held it towards me. In graceful powerful characters was written there: "*Rosa Damascena.*"

"Reflect now; you would have to write that four hundred times, over and over again," he impressively said.

"Good, you shall see, I can do it! . . . it is the name of a flower, and if I must write the word 'Rose' a thousand times, I shall always think at the same time of its delicious perfume. A rose's calyx has always been a marvel to me, I have always looked upon it as the palace of beetles—that is one of my 'Haide propensities' too—will you trust me with the work now?"

He remained silent, and now I began to fear that he had raised all these difficulties, because he did not wish to say directly that my mode of writing would not answer. Deeply humiliated, I thought of Luisa, the teacher's orphan—she was still in the house, and her clever, active hands were become quite remarkable; she, no doubt, did the thing far better than I could, and it was very daring of me to compare myself with her. Oh, how bitterly I repented having gone into the office! . . . Not without a strong ebullition of the old refractoriness did I seize upon my sample of writing, and put it in my pocket.

"I feel that I have been acting too forwardly, and formed a much too exalted idea of my accomplishments," I said, breathing hard. "Now that I see that beautiful, graceful handwriting"—and I pointed to the paper packet—"I feel ashamed."

I walked rapidly towards the door, but he had reached it before me.

"Do not leave me thus," he said, in his gentlest tones; "I am acting foolishly; you are beginning to give me a proof of the faintest possible dawn of confidence, and I gainsay you. But I cannot consent to your undergoing a martyrdom which your whole nature rebels against. You told me yourself that you accomplished that mechanically, and with

clenched teeth. . . . I do not *wish* either, that your hand, which has hitherto been unsullied by the touch of money and its accompanying curse, should be wearied for the sake of a few pence—the seventeen-year-old human marvel, that had never seen money! Did you think it passed by me, then, like a new scene, or a strange national costume, or anything of that kind? . . . I explained to you at the beginning, that the overgrown rebellious element in your nature must be curbed,—unruliness disfigures a woman in my eyes, though thousands may regard it as a kind of wild grace—but your individuality must not be injured in the process."

"Well, I am undertaking the curbing of it in proposing to work hard and unweariedly," I replied, obstinately. "I know that others seek healing in labour. You yourself are busy from morning till night, and exact the same from those around you."

He smiled.

"I exact from each—and rightly so—the strictest diligence in his vocation . . . but do you imagine I am such an ingrained lover of work, that I would knead everybody and everything into one and the same mould? . . . One who lops the superfluous branches of the trees off, I allow to do as he will; but I can scold him severely if he dare to touch with his rude finger one of the tender blossoms, or

rub the bloom from off the velvety leaves. . . . I should dearly like to see the wilful shake of that curly head somewhat gentler; but only by means of attaining mental superiority, never under the palsy-ing yoke of mechanical labour."

I saw now that I was on the point of losing my only prospect of earning anything, because, do what I would, I could not resume the business tone, which he himself had entirely laid aside. Every word he uttered sounded as repressed and hushed, as though he feared any raising of his voice might light a flame within, which would lead on to passion. Could some word have escaped, which recalled to his memory the faithless lady? . . . Moved by an inexplicable sense of passionate pain and sympathy for one who had once suffered so much, I seized the only remaining way—entreathy. I begged and implored in such ardent tones, that I was myself surprised.

A flash of light, like sunshine, spread over his face.

"Well, then, you shall have what you wish," he said, in a thrilling voice, after a moment's reflection. "Now I understand how it was that even the rough, stern *Frau Ilse* could do so little with the '*Haide-prinzesschen!*' . . . No, no, we have not done quite so quickly yet," he exclaimed, as after a few words

of thanks I was about to leave the room. "It is only just now that I should make a request, is it not? . . . Don't be frightened, I will not ask you to shake hands"—how bitter and humiliating that assurance sounded to me—"I will only ask you to answer me one question truly."

I turned back and looked up at him.

"Was I mistaken—or was it really your voice which called me the night I returned after the accident at Dorotheenthal?"

I felt the burning colour spread over my face, but replied without hesitation: "Yes, it was I—I was afraid"—I stopped, for the door opened, and Erdmann entered . . . with an expression of the most profound annoyance Herr Claudius pointed to a packet of letters to be taken to the post. The old man had a letter in his hand, which he laid upon the table, and then proceeded to fill a bag slung around him with the others.

"From Fräulein Charlotte," he said, as he noticed the evident surprise with which his master looked at the seal of the letter he had brought with him.

"That letter will not go till early to-morrow morning, Erdmann," said Herr Claudius, curtly, taking it to himself.

During this conversation I had reached the door, and before he could call me back again, I was

standing in the hall with a beating heart. I breathed once more—the bear of an old man had come just at the right moment; in an instant more I should have allowed Herr Claudius to induce me to confess all I had suffered that evening about him. . . . What did it mean? The ground gave way beneath my feet; the old gentleman in the blue spectacles! —all at once this phantom of the past had disappeared; and all that had made such a deep impression on me, in the new world, seemed as nothing when compared with the striking appearance of the “Kramer.”

## XXVII.

I RAN upstairs to the sitting-rooms. Three, communicating with one another and surrounding Charlotte's, were always comfortably warmed and lighted. The doors all stood wide open, and Herr Claudius liked, when conversing, to be able now and then to pace their entire length. The circle that assembled round the tea-table was a very small one. A few old gentlemen, so-called respectable people, and a few friends of old times came now and then; but my father—and as a matter of course, his “daisy” too—with young Helldorf were regular guests; Louisa, too, the

young orphan and silent needlewoman, was also present. On the other hand, the old bookkeeper had excused himself once for all by saying he was growing old, and wished to avoid passing through the garden on cold and foggy evenings: in reality, however, he had openly declared that the House of Claudius had assumed such a doubtful aspect, that he at all events had determined to wash his hands of it, and take no part in that for which the present owner would one day have to answer to his predecessors.

On this occasion the rooms were still empty. It was a cold November evening; the first light flakes of snow were mingling with a close, fine rain, which hung over the earth like a heavy cloud; and gusts of wind moaned through the streets.

I found Fräulein Fliedner handling the clattering cups and saucers as I entered the parlour. The old lady was somewhat excited, for the china was slipping through her fingers in quite a confused manner. . . . Charlotte was watching her with a malicious smile. She had thrown herself into a corner of the sofa, and was half-smothered in the glittering folds of a green silk dress, which was overloaded with flounces and puffings. The striking style of her beauty fascinated me afresh; her splendid figure showed off to such advantage in the warm

soft cushions; at the same time the contrast between her bare neck and arms and the chilly November wind outside, made me shiver a little; the voluptuous beauty was covered only with a mass of very transparent lace.

"For pity's sake, my dear Fliedner, do be cautious," she exclaimed, with an affectation of nervousness, but without changing her comfortable, careless attitude in the slightest degree. "The late Frau Claudio would turn in her grave, if she knew how you are using all her porcelain mementos of christenings and family re-unions, and I know not what other hallowing recollections which may hang round them . . . the matter is not worth speaking of—what are you thus annoyed about? . . . Can I help this Louisa being odious to me? And is it my fault that this weeping-willow face always looks as if she was asking forgiveness from God and man that she is in existence? . . . The girl is instinctively conscious of what I say out unaffectedly—she doesn't suit in the parlour with her schoolmistress manners. This is a piece of uncle's humanity, which he carries too far, in thus bringing her into a position for which she is wholly unsuited. . . . Dear me, I am no savage either . . . but there is a propriety!—Good-evening, *Prinzesschen*."

She held out her hand and drew me down on the sofa beside her. "Sit quiet there now, child,

and don't be gliding perpetually about the room, like a will-o'-the-wisp," said she, imperiously. "Otherwise uncle will be giving me a neighbour who provokes me, with her eternal muslin stitching and coarse steel thimble."

"One of these intolerable evils you can easily remedy," said Fräulein Fliedner, very quietly. "Give Louisa one of your silver thimbles,—you never use them."

"Very seldom, at all events," laughed Charlotte, holding up her long, white fingers. "I know why too . . . do you see these nails, my best of Fliedners? . . . they are not very small, but rosy and blamelessly elegant—on each of them stands the patent of nobility. Don't you think so?" She drew up her upper lip in a peculiar manner and, laughing impertinently, shewed the whole row of her fine white teeth.

"No, most decidedly I do not think so," replied Fräulein Fliedner, excitedly, the flush of anger rising to her cheek. "Nature gives no such patent in opposition to labour; nor does a few words, written by a prince, the result of which, according to some foolish people is, all at once to turn honest red into bad blue blood—such princely words even have not the power to release any individual from the work to which mankind is properly called. It

would be wrong, and a contradiction in the Almighty's mode of acting, if rulers were really given the power to sanction laziness. . . . I must, however, on this occasion, remind you of one thing,—up to this moment it has never crossed my lips; but your arrogance no longer knows any bounds, it becomes every hour more and more intolerable, and, therefore, I must say to you: Don't forget that you are an *adopted child*."

"Oh yes, just such a poor creature, eating the bread of kindness, isn't that it, my good Fliedner?" exclaimed Charlotte, fixing her sparkling eyes on the old lady's face, scornfully. "And just think that doesn't cause me much pain, not so much as that," and she filliped her fingers together. "It tastes most excellent, because I cannot rid myself of the belief that it belongs to me by the rights of God and man. . . . Besides what I wrote to Dagobert to-day is perfectly true, that since Eckhof fell out of favour, you play the first fiddle at the tea-table.—You are growing impertinent, my good Fliedner."

She stopped all at once and looked over the old lady's head at the door, where Herr Claudius had made his appearance noiselessly. Not in the least put out, she rose and greeted him. . . . Curtly returning her salutation, he walked at once over to

the table, holding the seal of the letter, which he had intercepted in the office, up to the lamp.

"How do you come by these arms, Charlotte?" he said quietly, but with perceptible sharpness in his tone.

She was frightened. I saw it in the slight twitch of her half-closed eye-lids, from which she had previously affected to inspect the arms with indifference.

"How I come by them, uncle?" she repeated, shrugging her shoulders almost playfully. "I am very sorry—but I can give you no explanation about that."

"What do you mean by that?"

"Did I not speak distinctly enough, Uncle Eric? —Well, then, at this moment I am not in a position to tell you how I came by this pretty little seal. . . . I *too* have my little secrets, of which not a few are to be found in the old Claudius house. . . . I have not stolen it; neither have I bought it; nor has it been made a present to me either." So far did she venture to play ball with this fatal riddle in the very face of that extreme gravity.

"The intellectual solution is that you have found it, although I cannot think where," he said, evidently disgusted with her pert way and manner of jesting with him. "I have not the least intention of inquiring further—keep your secret. I ask you

therefore instead: How do you come to *use* these arms?"

"Because—well, because I like it."

"Ah so,—that is an amazing view of *meum* and *tuum*! . . . These arms are indeed extinct; and personally I am wholly wanting in respect for the fictitious halo which surrounds such a tiny shield. I might, no doubt, allow you the childish pleasure of continuing to seal your letters with this little crowned eagle, if—you were not Charlotte—but one never puts cards in the hands of a notorious gambler, whom one wishes to cure—and I here forbid you once for all to use this little seal, which you have found, in future."

"Uncle, I ask you in return, if you really have the right to forbid me?" she said, in uncontrollable passion. I trembled with fear and excitement. She was on the very point of disclosing the plot at one blow.

Herr Claudius stepped back and measured her with a haughty look of astonishment.

"You dare to doubt it?" He was angry, but retained outwardly perfect self-control. "On the day when you—you and your brother—left Madame Godwin's house with me, this right became mine. I gave you the name of Claudius, and no law in the world can gainsay me, if I insist that you shall bear

it without any modification. Has the moment really come when I shall be forced to rue having spread this valued jewel of my fathers as a shield over your's and Dagobert's head. . . . My brother injured it in having united this folly—he pointed to the ring—with it; with *my* consent it shall never be revived!" A mocking smile crossed Charlotte's features; he observed it and knit his brows.

"A childishly weak and diseased mind in such a powerful form," he said, running his eye over the young girl's imposing form. "You complain and grumble at the arrogance of the nobility, and yet help to strengthen it like thousands of similar foolish creatures by the eagerness you shew to belong to their circle, by servile submission, where you are only endured. . . . I am not one of those fanatical opponents of the nobility, who long to tear them from their pedestal—let them stay there—but I will also maintain my position . . . the significance of their place in the world is, besides, quite different—if I do not *make* myself its slave, I am not one. Its imaginary strength only takes root in your weakness—where there is no adoration, there will be no idols."

Charlotte threw herself once more into the sofa corner; it evidently cost her a tremendous effort to curb her tongue.

"But how can I help my nature?" she exclaimed, not without scorn. "Be it even so—I cannot help it, I belong to those 'foolish creatures.' Why should I deny it?—if this charming little crowned eagle really belonged to my own family name, I should be proud of it—proud beyond measure!"

"Well, it is ordained that trees shall not grow so high as heaven. . . . Woe to them who should be obliged to live with you, did this fancied superiority of birth really belong to you. Happily neither your own name, nor that of your adoption justifies—"

"My own name? . . . What is that like, Uncle Eric?" She raised herself involuntarily, and fixed her glowing eyes steadfastly and piercingly upon his face.

"Have you really forgotten it? it, which sounds a thousand times sweeter in your ears than the coarse, German, worthless name of Cladius? . . . It is—Méricourt." . . . It was evident that he uttered the name with an effort.

Charlotte sank back again in the pillows and pressed her handkerchief to her lips.

"Is tea ready, my dear Fliedner?" said Herr Cladius, turning to the old lady, who, like myself, had sat listening breathlessly to the dangerous conversation.

While he drew a chair for himself to the table, she poured out the tea rapidly; her delicate little hands were somewhat unsteady as she handed him the cup, and with a look of anxiety shyly scanned his clouded brow—and this old lady was his partner in guilt; this gentle, loveable, kind old lady, the sharer of a perpetual dark iniquity—never! Herr Claudius had once more involved the strange circumstances in the deepest mystery by his last firm and decided answer—I believe *him*. Charlotte thought otherwise; I read in her face, that her conviction was immovable. She sat like a princess beside me, and allowed Fräulein Fliedner to tend her, and the mocking smile which still lingered on her lips was at the name of Méricourt. . . . What a contradiction was this haughty soul itself! Once upon a time, in the supposition that her name was the French one, she had rejected the idea that the plebeian blood of the Claudius's ran in her veins with scorn; and now she threw it away, like a cast-off dress, at the discovery that she really was a Claudius, the veritable niece of the despised “Kramer.” . . . Ah, I, the harmless child of the Haide, was utterly at a loss to understand, how a few magic words from a prince, a few scratches of his pen, sufficed to cleave the old stock of the mercantile house to its very root, and turn the severed branch into such new nobility

as to be unrecognisable! Just then Louisa came in, and after her, Helldorf. I drew a long breath, as though a fresh and reviving element had come in. These two had not the faintest suspicion on what a volcano the peaceful looking tea-table stood; but they recklessly broke up the deep silence which had prevailed ever since Herr Claudius had spoken last; I always felt, too, in Helldorf's vicinity, a sense of protection, a homelike, familiar tie . . . had I not, gradually become the petted, cherished child of his brother's house?

He gave me a white paper with a meaning smile and careful fingers. I knew what it contained—a just opening tea-rose, which Frau Helldorf had long been nursing for me, and which she had told me that morning I should receive at the tea-table, if in the course of the day the bud should open. I uttered a cry of delight as I opened the paper—thick, white, and towards the centre a pale yellow, the heavily perfumed blossom swayed upon its stem. . . .

“Oh, pray, take a little care of my dress, Louisa; you are tearing off the flounces!” exclaimed Charlotte, at that moment angrily drawing the rustling folds of her dress towards her. She was very angry, but I could not believe it was on account of her dress—a tear in her richest dress was always a

matter of great indifference to her. I had often seen her increase, with her own hands, the three cornered tear a thorn-bush had made in a beautiful lace handkerchief, because it looked so ridiculous, and she had pulled Fräulein Fliedner's Pinscher by the ears, because he had torn the trimming of a new dress with such charming mischief.

Louisa drew back frightened, looked up with terrified eyes, and stammered forth an apology. Although the expected injury did not appear, one could not fail to observe the terror with which the imperious young lady inspired the depressed, timid young creature . . . it was a painful scene, and would certainly have ended unpleasantly for Charlotte, had not Fräulein Fliedner come to the rescue.

Giving one rapid glance at Herr Claudius's ominously knitted brow, she seized the rose and fastened it in my hair.

"You look splendid, my little brunette," she said, patting me on the cheek, kindly.

Charlotte buried herself more deeply than ever in her corner—her long lashes lay upon her burning cheek, as though she slept,—she did not vouchsafe a single glance to the adornment of my hair.

In spite of the inclemency of the weather some more guests dropped in. An animated discussion then arose, and Charlotte roused herself from her

apparent apathy—the temptation to shew off her brilliant conversational powers was one she could not resist. Her genius seemed to sparkle with un-wonted brilliancy on that occasion; I had never before seen her so animated. Her mocking laughter often mingled unpleasantly in it indeed; and the wanton air with which she threw her voluptuous form about, the unreserved play of her round white shoulders, the looseness of her robe, which disclosed somewhat too fully for maiden modesty the splendid female bust, . . . all seemed as though every fibre were alive with electricity, as if it were fire, not blood, which flowed through her veins. . . .

With a mingled feeling of horror and admiration my gaze seemed riveted on her—when all at once a hand passed over my eyes, as though to forbid the sight—it was Herr Claudius, who sat next me. Immediately after he asked Helldorf to sing. His unmistakable object in asking the young man to sing, that of shutting up the witty red lips yonder, even for a few moments, did not succeed; Charlotte continued speaking, though perhaps in a lower tone, just as though she had no idea that Schubert's "Wanderer" was being sung over at the piano with touching power.

"If you do not care for music yourself, Charlotte, at least do not spoil the enjoyment of others,"

said Herr Claudius, authoritatively, as he signed with his hand that silence must be observed.

She shrank back and ceased talking. She leaned her head back on one of the sofa cushions with an air of proud indifference, and began playing with one of the long thick curls, which hung down on her neck. She never once looked up as the young man returned into the room, and received the lively thanks of everybody present.

One of the gentlemen, however, begged her to sing a duet with Helldorf.

"No, not to-day—I am not inclined for it," she said, in a careless tone, without changing her position, without even looking up.

I saw Helldorf's handsome face grow pale to his very lips. I felt so deeply grieved for him. I could not endure that a member of the family I had become so tenderly attached to should be offended. I rose courageously.

"I will sing the duet with you, if you like," I said to him—and my voice quivered, for it seemed to me as though I were doing something amazing, something perfectly superhuman.

And he knew that—he knew my timidity before strangers. . . . With a rapid motion he raised my hand to his lips, and led me to the piano.

I don't think I ever sang in all my life so well,

or with so much expression, as on that evening. A powerful, if incomprehensible excitement enabled me to overcome" the nervousness which obscured the first few notes. . . . One by one, every one present had stolen noiselessly up to us, and at the close we were overwhelmed with applause; I was more especially called a lark, a flute, and I know not what all, by the old gentlemen.

Then came Charlotte too. She rushed up to me and put her arm round my waist. I was frightened at her. She bent low enough over me to hide the sparkling tears which stood in her eyes; but they were tears of anger, which with tightly compressed lips and heaving bosom she was endeavouring with all her might to suppress. Had I but known then in the very faintest manner the nature of the passion which so fearfully excited her, how easily could I have calmed her, how willingly would I have done so! At it was, however, an inexpressible sense of anxiety oppressed me, and I made an effort to escape from her clasp.

"Now just look at the Haide lark!" she laughed aloud. "With one single grasp you could crush the little songstress,"—she tightened her arm round me, so that I gasped for breath,—"and she quavers till the walls tremble."

Before I was aware of it, she had drawn me

away into a more secluded part of the room, to all appearance coaxing and caressing me—suddenly she brushed her hand violently over my head, and the rose flew into the centre of the next room.

“Charming little coquette, you have played your part to perfection!—who could have believed that such a dangerous element lay hidden in the bare-footed maiden?” she whispered with carefully suppressed voice in my ear. “And do you know what is done with those who are thus celebrated?” she exclaimed louder. “People raise them high above the common herd . . . thus, thus . . . you feather, you charming nothing!”

Suddenly I felt myself raised from the ground so high that I could have touched the ceiling, which in the upper story at the front house was not very lofty. In the powerful arms of this young girl I was, indeed, but as a morsel of down floating about—a powerless being with helpless infant hands, a veritable nothing! Even over my voice I had lost all power; shame and terror had choked me. I felt as if I were in a madwoman’s power.

Laughing, she flew through the room with me, while I involuntarily closed my eyes . . . a sudden blow on my head aroused me—we had run against the heavy bronze lustre, which hung very low in the farthest off room. I uttered a trembling cry,

and the company came running in, while my "bearer" let me down, considerably alarmed. I just saw as through a mist that Herr Claudius took me in his arms, and then darkness fell upon me.

How long this insensibility lasted I know not, but it seemed to me that I gradually awoke much in the same way that I had done so often on Ilse's lap when I was a child. I felt myself gently supported, and now and then a whispered breath which I knew not, and which yet sounded so exactly like Ilse's pet names for me which, properly speaking, I was never intended to hear. But the heart against which I leaned was beating violently—that was quite a different one to Ilse's. Startled, I opened my eyes, and gazed into a face flushed with a passionate anxiety, such as I can never forget.

Suddenly I understood the position I was in, and turned away my face colouring, but at the motion my head began to pain me. The arm which had been supporting me was immediately withdrawn, and Herr Claudius, who had been sitting on the sofa by me, sprang up.

"Oh, my dear, sweet child—God be praised, there are your large eyes once more!" exclaimed Fräulein Fliedner, in a trembling voice. She was just in the act of wringing out a linen cloth in a china plate.

I put up my hand to feel my head. It was bound up, and the cold water was trickling down on my left temple from the bandage. Quicker than I could have imagined did I once more gain the mastery over my nerves, and that strange, unknown feeling, which for one short moment had thrilled my soul with such indescribable sweetness and joy. . . . I thought of Charlotte and the severe rebuke she was sure to receive with deep anxiety—as soon as possible I must be upon my feet again, ~~well~~ and whole.

“What have I been doing?” I inquired, raising myself energetically.

“You have been in a slight faint, darling,” said Fräulein Fliedner, evidently delighted at my cheerfulness.

“What? have I been such a weak creature? . . . Oh, if Ilse only knew that! . . . She can’t endure ladies with weak nerves . . . but we will take off this cloth, Fräulein Fliedner . . . it really is not necessary,” I said, putting up my hand. “Oh, my rose!” I exclaimed, involuntarily.

“You shall have it again,” said Herr Claudius, looking cast down—I saw his bosom heave as with a sigh. He went into the adjoining room and took up the rose which still lay there on the floor.

“I must do it honour, Frau Helldorf has been

nursing it so long for me—we have watched every leaf as it grew," I said, looking up at him, as he gave it into my hand.

These few words produced a strange effect—the melancholy which had hung on Herr Claudius's brow disappeared entirely at them, the curtains yonder rustled, and Charlotte, who up to that moment had sought the shade of the window niche, now came forward. She advanced towards me and threw herself on her knees.

"Prinzesschen," she said, in soft beseeching tones, stretching out her hands to me, begging forgiveness.

Herr Claudius stepped between us. I trembled—never yet had I seen those great, blue eyes light up with such ungovernable fury.

"You shall not touch her with the tip of your finger. Never again. I shall know how to guard her in future from you," he said, pushing away her hand. . . . How remorselessly severe and stern that quiet, composed voice could sound.

Fräulein Fliedner moved forward in alarm and looked anxiously into his face—for the first time, for years past, passion again broke forth, the barriers of a sternly exercised and unexampled self-control broke down . . . the old lady closed the room door noiselessly; the gentlemen were still in Charlotte's room.

"I repent—bitterly repent the moment in which I sought to lead you by my guidance into a purer atmosphere," he continued in the same tone. "I have drawn water in a sieve,—nature won't change, and the wild blood in your veins—"

"Say rather 'the proud', uncle," she said, rising from the ground. She was pale as death, and her head thrown back on her shoulders, looked statuesque in its quiet scorn.

"Proud?" he repeated, with a bitter smile. "Tell me, how you are won't to exhibit this beautiful ornament of woman? and why? Perhaps, just now, when devoid of all womanliness, or dignity, you exhibited yourself in the light of an unbridled Bacchante."

She drew back as if he had struck her in the face.

"And what else do you call proud?" he continued. "Your unseemly hankering after rank and position? Your way and manner of acting towards people, who, in your opinion, are far beneath you? With that same heartless manner you are constantly annoying me bitterly, and seriously shaking the rotten foundation on which you stand . . . Beware!"

"Of what, Uncle Eric?" she broke in coolly and with a mocking expression on her lips. "Have not my brother and I already experienced every form

of oppression? Is there really another side to our tolerably high-tuned souls which you have not already sought out with a severe hand and pronounced as opposed to, and incapable of union with what I may call practical home-baked life? Do you not always seek to stifle our ideal, wherever you can?"

"Yes, as poisonous stuff, as imaginary dreams, which have nothing to do with the morality or development of the human mind. You, ignoble in the very depths of your soul! You have not even a spark of gratitude!"

"I would thank you for the bread I have eaten, if I had not *more* to demand from you," she burst out.

"For pity's sake, be silent, Charlotte," said Fräulein Fliedner, seizing her arm. She shook the old lady off, angrily.

Herr Claudius, dumb with amazement, measured the young girl's haughtily posed figure from head to foot. "And what do you demand?" he then asked in the same tone of perfect calm as of old.

"Light upon my birth before everything."

"You wish to know the real truth?"

"Yes, I am not afraid of it," she exclaimed, with a kind of triumph.

He turned his back on her and paced the room a few times. The silence was so deathlike,

I fancied I could hear the beating of the excited pulses.

"No, not now—not now, when you have just offended and annoyed me so deeply—it would be an ignoble revenge," he said at last, pausing opposite to her. He raised his arm and pointed towards the door. "Go—never were you less fitted to learn the truth than at this moment."

"I knew it," she laughed aloud, and rushed out into the corridor.

Fräulein Fliedner laid a fresh bandage round my head with trembling hands; and then went across to see after the gentlemen again.

My heart beat. I was alone with Herr Claudius. He sat down on a chair beside me.

"That was a stormy scene, ill-suited to these frightened eyes, from which I long above all things to keep all evil impressions," he said, in an unsteady voice. "You have seen me give way to violence. How sorry I am for that; the little confidence you shewed in me to-day will, no doubt, be all gone now. I can imagine that."

I shook my head.

"No?" he asked, and his clouded brow cleared up. "A flame is easily kindled in my brain. I know it and have always carefully kept it down, only to-day, when I heard your cry and saw the

blood streaming down your pale face." He stood up and paced the room, as though the very remembrance of it was too much for him.

His eyes scanned the ceiling of the room and the old-fashioned lustre.

"The evil old house!" he said, standing still. "An evil spirit hovers over these old walls and their furniture. . . . I begin to understand the building of the Carolinenlust—and old Eberhard Claudius. . . . My beautiful grandmother drooped like a flower within these walls—those ordinary, quiet-hearted housekeepers from choice, of whom enough have borne sway here, found it a quiet, peaceful home,—but an idolized, beloved woman has always found the house dangerous."

His voice thrilled through me. No doubt he had spoken in just that tone to the faithless one—how was it possible that she had notwithstanding left him? . . .

"Your childish instinct taught you to shrink at once from the cold, dark front house," he continued, again seating himself near me.

"Yes, that was at first," I interrupted him, eagerly, "when I came from the Haide and every wall seemed to me a cellar—that was very childish. It is not light in the Dierkhof either—there are old dismal panes enough there, through which the sun never

shines, and it is cold and gloomy in the barn, no matter how warm the sun may shine outside in the Haide. . . . No, I like the old front house now, and look at it with quite different eyes, and ever since I have read about Augsburg and the *Fuggers* I always fancy the ladies with the veiled foreheads will come down from their frames and meet me in the passages or on the stairs."

"Oh, that is poetry with which the Haideprinzesschen used to invest the bleak, barren Haide too. You make the old mercantile house endurable to yourself with it, and fly to the Carolinenlust for refuge."

"No—it is still dearer and more home-like here. . . . Was there then nobody in the front house whom your beautiful great-grandmother loved?"

What could I have said that made him start back thus and look at me as if petrified? . . .

The door opened and Fräulein Fliedner entered accompanied by the doctor; just after, my father arrived. At first he was very anxious about my accident; but the physician declared there was not the slightest cause for alarm. One of my curls fell under the scissors, then a fresh bandage was applied; and I was forbidden to venture again into the night air. I slept for the first time, watched by Fräulein Fliedner, in the front house, and through my light

feverish dreams I saw one small form; she wore the veil belonging to the females of the old Claudio's house, and walked about the passages and stairs; but her feet never touched the cold stone; it was all strewn with the garden blossoms, and the little being—I felt it under a strange blissful sensation—was myself.

## XXVIII.

THE next morning with the first pale ray of sunshine, fled all these fond delusions as a matter of course. I felt ashamed and yet could scarce tell why. . . . Fräulein Fliedner protested energetically, but all in vain. I sprang out of bed, dressed myself rapidly, though with trembling hands, and ran to the Carolinenlust. I flew from the front house—but it was no longer possible to escape the quick eye before which I had once so trembled, and, strange to say, Herr Claudio who had hitherto opposed a grave and quiet front to my repulsive bearing, and observed a highly reserved demeanour, did not retreat one hair's breadth from the position he had assumed that evening. . . . He had once taken me in his protecting arms, and it seemed now as though that were to endure to all

eternity. My shy flight when he approached, my downcast eyes whenever he spoke to me, my silence when in his presence all was of no avail . . . he continued to address me in the same tender tones he had once begun, and his beaming happy brow showed no fear. He held me fast without touching me; and the promise he had made of protecting me was true in every sense. He was almost more in the observatory than in his office; there were no more tea evenings in the front house, but instead Herr Claudius was often present at our little tea-table in the library, and while the wintry storm raged without, round the corners, and the green curtains, unfastened from their loops, blew about in the room, my father often gave one of his celebrated lectures in presence of his two companions, at the tea-table. Herr Claudius always listened with the deepest attention; now and then some objection would fall from his lips, and the speaker would draw back in amazement, for it was new and original, and supported by an amount of knowledge which in the "Kramer" he would least of all have expected to meet with.

Our agreement relative to my performances in the writing line had also been put in practice. I received my work through Fräulein Fliedner and joyfully delivered it back again through her hands,

unspeakably amazed at the extraordinary amount of money a person could earn by writing; for care never troubled me again, and yet I always had a nice little residue to dispose of.

What a change! I felt myself caught and fast bound to another soul beyond hope of rescue, and yet no longer envied the little bird which could wing its flight all unfettered over my native Haide—on the contrary, I could have shouted aloud to all the four winds of Heaven that I was a prisoner; and, indeed, I should almost have liked to run my head against one of the trees, to feel but once again the joy of seeing how my other self suffered with me. For the sake of that one I forgot myself and the whole world beside, and even the fact that I bore two sins upon my conscience—that of a lie and the secret complicity in a secret so closely touching him. How did I then “fall from all my bliss,” when Charlotte’s voice resounded in my ear, or her unmistakable appearance crossed my vision. She observed, indeed, a strict reserve towards me now. The day after that stormy evening she had come into my room,—“I will not touch you with the tip of my finger, nor even let a breath from my lips approach you,” she had called from the doorway, bitterly.—“I only want to make peace with you, Prinzesschen. Forgive me for what I did to

you."—I had sprung towards her instantly, and, much touched, seized her hand.

"Did you see how I yesterday put our tyrant to the top of his bent? . . . He is lost. . . . I wander about the house with closed lips and a heavy heart. Every morsel I eat nearly chokes me with rage and inward disgust; but I will endure it,—I must watch over our precious treasure in the writing-table, I dare not leave till Dagobert comes. . . . Oh, how I shall shout for joy, when at last I shake off the trammels of the shop for ever, and set foot on the floor of my parents' house!"

At this passionate outbreak I had let her hand drop and stepped backward. Since that time we had seldom met alone; only when I came back in one of the Court carriages from the Princess, she generally met me in the yard and accompanied me through the garden, and I had to relate and report every particular. . . . Soon after her visit at Claudius's house the Princess had fallen ill of a rheumatic attack, and had been obliged to leave K. to undergo a speedy course of treatment. During her absence I, of course, never went to the Court; but now I had to appear there twice every week, and those were the only occasions on which Herr Claudius went about with a deeply clouded brow.

Thus passed week after week in alternations of

happiness and heart breaking anxiety, of inward strife and again blessed peace, and now the end of January was approaching and with it Dagobert. A mortal terror seized me as I heard that the Lieutenant had arrived, bag and baggage,—the dreaded moment seemed to be so near, in all its depth of darkness and gigantic might; and yet I felt that one rapid, decisive, if painful blow would be far preferable to this state of hope and fear. Let the crisis be what it might, it would free me at all events from my unholy participation in the matter, and give me leave to confess my folly with sincere repentance.

Those were troubled days to me, for another burden weighed upon my mind,—my father appeared to me all of a sudden strangely altered. His whole manner and bearing reminded me of the time when the purchase of the medal had been in question; he eat nothing, and I could hear him wandering about restlessly at night. A strange inundation of letters from all directions overwhelmed him, and every fresh one that he opened increased the feverish flush upon his sunken cheek. He wrote incessantly, but not at the manuscript which treated of the discoveries in the Carolinenlust,—it lay untouched on the writing-table. I strained my ears to catch the words he continually kept muttering to himself, as he paced up and down the room, but I could not understand

a word and I did not venture to ask, lest I might have excited his impatience.

Never shall I forget those hours, when his suppressed uneasiness at last broke forth. It was one of those dreary, dark winter afternoons, which hang like lead over the earth and mankind. My father had retired to his own room after dinner and taken the newspapers which had just come in with him. A few minutes afterwards I heard him spring up inside; he slammed the door violently and rushed up to the library. Anxiously did I follow him.

"Father," I cried, imploringly, and threw my arms round him as he rushed past me without even seeing me.

I must have looked greatly terrified, for he ran both his hands through his hair and visibly made a great effort to be calm.

"It is nothing, Lorchén," he said, huskily. "Go downstairs again, my child, . . . people lie . . . they grudge your father his renown . . . they know that they are giving him his death-blow when they dispute his authority, and now they are coming in a mass, and each with a stone in his hand. . . . Yes, stone him, stone him! He has enjoyed distinction too long already!"

Suddenly he stopped and looked over my head towards the door. A lady had entered noise-

lessly; a very tall person, in a velvet cloak and ermine collar. She threw back a white veil and disclosed—oh, what beauty! I thought involuntarily on Snow-white. Eyes, black as sloes, snow-white forehead, and cheeks on which lay a soft rosy hue.

My father stared at her in amazement, while she advanced towards us with hesitating steps. A faint smile played around her mouth, and a roguish twinkle lurked in the glance she gave my father,—it looked enchanting, almost child-like; and yet I thought behind that innocent demeanour an anxious heart must be beating, for the cherry coloured lips occasionally twitched with nervous excitement.

“He does not know me,” she said in pleasing tones, as my father continued silent. “I must remind him of the days when we played together in the garden at Hanover, and the elder sister galloped round and round as Wilibald’s horse, and many a time felt the lash of his whip—do you still remember it?”

My father drew back as though he saw the claws of a monster appearing from under the beautiful lady’s velvet mantle. With one freezing glance he measured her from head to foot,—never could I have supposed that this man with his undecided absent ways could have been capable of displaying such repulsive severity and coldness.

"I cannot believe it possible," he said, sternly, "that Christine Wolf, who once indeed lived in my father Herr von Sassen's house, dares to cross my threshold."

"Wilibald—"

"I must beg to be excused," he interrupted her, raising his hand to keep her off; "we have nothing to do with each other! . . . Were you only one who had erred, and through the invincible love of art been tempted to leave your paternal roof, I should at once receive you,—but with a thief I will hold no communication."

"Oh Heaven!" She clasped her hands together and looked mournfully upwards. I could not comprehend how he was able to withstand that Madonna glance, though the word "thief" had gone through me like an electric shock.—"Wilibald, have pity. Do not judge a youthful error so severely," she entreated. "Could I begin that ardently longed for career with empty hands? My mother would not allow me a single farthing, that you know, and it was so little, such a mere trifle, I asked of that rich woman—"

"Only twelve thousand thalers, which you took out of her tight locked secretaire—"

"Had I not a right to it? . . . tell me."

"And also to the diamonds of the Baroness.

Hanke, who was just then our guest. They disappeared entirely with you, and my mother replaced them at the heaviest sacrifice, to preserve our house from public scandal."

"Lies, all lies!" she shrieked out.

"Go away, Lorchen—this is no fitting place for you," said my father, leading me to the door.

"No, don't go away, my sweet child. Take pity on me, and help me to convince him of my innocence. . . . You are Lenore! . . . Oh, what sweet, happy eyes!—She took me in her arms and kissed my eyelids—the soft velvet mantle fell over me; a delicious scent of violets seemed to exhale from her bosom and intoxicated me completely.

My father tore me away from her sternly. "Don't delude my innocent child," he exclaimed angrily, and led me out.

I went downstairs and crouched on the lowest step quite stunned. . . . And so that was my aunt Christine, "the skeleton in the family," as Ilse called her, "the star" as she had styled herself. And a star she was, this marvellously beautiful woman. Everything I had hitherto seen of female loveliness paled before the youthful aspect and exquisite complexion of my aunt's face. . . . How heavy and luxuriant did her black locks show off against the white ermine! How beautiful was her polished brow

in which at the temples one could observe the course of the delicate blue veins! And that soft, coaxing voice was there once more, the treatment had proved effectual! . . . The slender hands which had held me so gently and drawn me with such tenderness to her breast—they had stolen! . . . No, no, the anger my aunt had shown at the accusation completely disproved it—had I not seen tears glistening in her eyes.

With beating heart I listened to the conversation in the library. I could not catch a syllable, nor did it last long. The door opened. "May God forgive you," I heard my aunt say, and then her dress came rustling down the stairs . . . her steps became slower and slower,—suddenly she leaned against the wall and covered her eyes. I sprang up the steps and seized her hand.

"Aunt Christine," I called out, deeply agitated.

She let her hand fall slowly, and gazed at me with a melancholy smile.

"My little angel, light of my eyes, *you* don't believe that I am a robber, do you?" said she, stroking my chin softly. "The wicked, wicked people, how they have hunted me with their slanders all my life! . . . What have I not had to endure! And in what a frightful position am I now, when your stern father inexorably refuses to receive me. Child, I have no roof to cover me, no pillow whereon to

lay my head; I have reached K. with the last penny in my pocket,—I wanted to see *you*, *you*, my little Lenore. . . . Oh, for a shelter even for a few days, then I could arrange something for my own assistance."

That was a painful position for me. . . . I would have given her up my own bed at once and slept on the ground, so deeply was I caught with this lady's charms; but against my father's wish I could not venture to keep her in the house. I thought of Fräulein Fliedner, she was so good and ready to help anyone, perhaps she could advise me. . . . Oh, all my fine resolutions, according to which I had intended hereafter first to reflect and then to act, where had they all fled to? . . .

Without another word I led my aunt downstairs and out across the gravel walk—she followed me as submissively as a child. Just as we were about to turn into the bosquet, we came upon the brother and sister. Charlotte in a rich white satin bonnet and velvet mantle thrown over her shoulders; they were evidently going to take a walk.

I had not yet seen "the young lieutenant," for I had studiously avoided him, though he had sought me for days in the Carolinenlust. Now I felt afraid of him, and in my inmost soul shrunk from him. He also seemed surprised; his brown eyes, of which

I had a horror ever since the explosion that day, in the *bel-этаж*, were fixed on me with a peculiar expression. I made as though I did not see the hand he offered me with a smile, and introduced my aunt to Charlotte. I noticed, with no small astonishment, that a strong emotion passed like a flash of lightning over the unfortunate lady's face—she seemed about to speak, but not a sound escaped her lips.

Charlotte bent her head slightly, and measured the person standing before her with rather a haughty glance.

"Fräulein Fliedner will scarcely be able to assist you," she said coldly to me, as I explained my intention in few words. "We have very little room in the front house . . . if you take my advice, you will apply to your friends the Helldorfs—they, no doubt, have a little room you could take your aunt to."

I turned away disgusted, and my aunt hastily drew down her veil.

Just at that moment Schäfer, the gardener, passed and saluted us. The Swiss cottage was his property, and I knew that he often let the so-called best room of his late wife to strangers. I ran after him and enquired about it,—he was quite ready to take my aunt in, on the spot, and begged her to accom-

pany him at once, everything was "in the neatest order."

Without casting another glance at the brother and sister, she followed the old man, who spoke to her in his kind gentle way, and conducted her to the gate, of which I had the key. Was it that some inward excitement drove her on?—Schäfer could scarcely keep pace with her, and in spite of every exertion on my part, I was left a considerable way behind.

"For pity's sake, shake yourself free of this aunt," said Charlotte, running after me. "She will do you no credit—the paint is inch deep on her face—and then this imitation ermine. *Fi donc!* . . . Child, you have singular relations—a grandmother a born Jewess, and now this out and out actress! . . . *A propos*, don't be too late this evening—Uncle Eric is, contrary to all expectations, going to spend a nice sum of money—the conservatory is going to be brilliantly illuminated. May it be for his good!"

She laughed aloud and took Dagobert's arm, who was standing looking after my aunt with an enquiring eye.

"I don't know—I—*must* have seen that woman before," he said, putting his hand up in reflection to his head. "Heaven knows where."

"Oh, that is very conceivable . . . you have

seen her on the stage," said Charlotte, drawing him on impatiently.

Deeply annoyed I looked after them . . . poor aunt! she was, indeed, an unfortunate woman, hunted by all mankind, and her beauty, the only thing that still remained to her, was that to be called . . . painted.

I thought the little room into which Schäfer conducted us was a thoroughly pretty and nice one. The old man had lighted a fire in the stove in the space of a few minutes, and filled the window-sill with pots of roses and mignonette.

"Low and narrow," said my aunt, raising her arm, as though about to touch the snow white ceiling. "I am not accustomed to that, but I will manage to get on—one can bear everything with a good will, can one not, my little angel?"

She threw off her bonnet and cloak, and stood before me in a velvet dress of royal blue. The splendid garment was indeed faded and worn at the seams and elbows, but it clothed a form like a sylph. The small train completed the truly regal aspect of her whole appearance, and from the low-cut bodice peeped forth Snow-white's gleaming bosom. . . . And what hair! It waved round her forehead and fell in long curls down her back and bosom, and yet the richest plaits were coiled round

her delicately shaped head—how it sustained this fabulous splendour I could not understand—still less, that she could move it about so easily.

This unconcealed admiration she read, no doubt, written on my face.

“Well, little Lenore, are you pleased with your aunt?” she said, with a roguish smile.

“Oh, you are too lovely,” I exclaimed enthusiastically. “And so young, so young, how is that possible? You are three years older than my father.”

“Silly thing, there is no occasion to scream that to all the four winds of heaven,” she said, with a forced laugh, laying her soft hand on my mouth.

Her eyes scanned the small apartment, and finally rested on a little looking glass hanging on the wall.

“Oh, that won’t do, that really won’t do,” she exclaimed, in a horrified tone. “One can scarcely see the tip of one’s nose in this fragment . . . how could I make my toilette? I am no peasant woman, child. I have been accustomed to live like a Princess. One may give in for once in many things . . . but that I *cannot*. You will get me a proper glass, won’t you? that I may have something a little more as I am accustomed to. Yonder, in that castle you are inhabiting at present, there is no doubt a super-

fluous mirror. . . . Child—in confidence—every attention you pay me in this hour of temporary distress shall be amply repaid you hereafter. Let what I require for my convenience be quietly brought over. I will answer for it."

"How can I do that, aunt?" I replied, quite stunned. "The furniture in our rooms belongs to Herr Claudius."

She smiled.

"I should not like to place a chair other than as I found it," I continued, gravely remonstrating. "Out of the Carolinenlust I cannot possibly procure you anything, but perhaps Frau Helldorf can give you what you require—we will see."

I felt more than ever cast down as I saw the unfavourable glance with which the little woman received my handsome, decorated *protégée*. It was of no avail that my aunt addressed all manner of pretty speeches to her in the sweetest voice, and called the two children that were playing in the room angels. My friend's delicate face lost nothing of its cold and suspicious reserve, and as I finally ventured on the request about the glass, she became like a statue, took her only one of tolerable size from the wall—gave it to the handsome lady and said with undisguised mockery: "I can manage without it."

"Be cautious, Lenore, I beg you; I will watch too," she whispered to me in the front room, as the blue velvet dress disappeared up the stairs.

Very much dejected, I laid my purse upon the table. In return, I received a kiss and the assurance, that "all my little sacrifices" would in a short time be repaid a thousand fold. Then, however, my aunt devoted herself to the task of placing the looking-glass in the best possible light, and I returned to the Carolinenlust with a double weight upon my heart.

## XXIX.

THE evening twilight was stealing in when I again entered the library. My father was wandering about the quiet chamber of antiquities, amid all the pale motionless forms, and did not again allude to his cast-off sister by a syllable,—he may have thought she was gone for ever, would never cross his path again, and that the sooner I forgot the circumstance the better. Shivering, I wrapped my shawl more closely round me,—it was bitterly cold in the large, fireless room, and a light fall of snow enveloped the skylight outside.

"You will catch cold here, papa," I said, taking

his hand,—it burned like a coal; and how his eyes glowed in the sunken sockets! ●

“Catch cold? . . . it is delightful here—it is just as if a cool bandage had been bound round my head.”

“But it is very late,” I replied, hesitating; “and you must arrange your dress a little. . . . I think you have forgotten that the Princess is coming again to-day, to see the large conservatory illuminated.”

“Ah, what have I to do with the conservatory?” he exclaimed, impatiently. “Do you want to set me mad with the lights and perfumes of the flowers, which always affect the nerves of my brain? . . . Nothing, nothing; what do I care for the Princess or the Duke either?”

His violent motions and the way in which he threw his arms about, knocked down a lovely little statue from its pedestal, and, strange to say, he, who never touched these “antiques” except in the gentlest and most careful manner, scarcely noticed the mischief he had done, and allowed the little goddess to lie there unobserved.

Terribly alarmed, I essayed to soothe him. “Just as you like, papa,” I replied. “I will send over to the other house at once and excuse our—”

“No, no, you must go at all events, Lorchén,” he interrupted me, in a calmer tone. “I wish you

to do so on account of the Princess, who is fond of you, and I also wish to spend this evening alone."

He went into the library again and made as though he were busy at his writing-table. I shut the doors, stirred up the fire in the stove, and arranged the tea-table; then I went downstairs, and with a beating heart began to dress myself; that is to say, I took the pearls my grandmother had given me for the first time again out of their case, and twined them among my curls. The glittering beads shone amid my dark hair with almost fabulous brilliancy, and with far more striking effect than when I had worn them round my neck—that was just what I wished. Who could tell when the Princess would be seen in the Claudio conservatory again! . . .

It was late when I at last crossed over the bridge and approached the conservatory. I stood for one moment dazzled. The last rays of the waning light shone faintly from the fleecy clouds above me; the frozen snow crackled ankle deep beneath my feet; and where'er I turned mine eye the trees and bushes, laden heavily with snow, stretched forth their spectre-like branches towards me. Yonder the magnificent palm-trees were towering in lofty grace above the wilderness of cactuses and ferns and the green patches of velvet sward between, while in the midst rose the fountain, falling

in silver spray around. Bathed in the hidden light of the gas jets, the green melted into a thousand shades, from the tender evanescent hue of spring to that of the darkest pine—the conservatory lay in the midst of the pale field of snow like an emerald rosette on white velvet.

"Ah, good evening, my little one," said the Princess, as I advanced towards her. She was sitting in the centre of a group of ferns, in the self same spot where I had told my grandmother's story. Herr Claudius was standing somewhat on one side of her chair, talking to her, while her suite and the brother and sister had arranged themselves in careless groups on either side. "Haideprinzesschen, you come forth just like a water-sprite," she said, jesting, "One would think you had just stepped out of the fountain . . . child, do not you really know what a costly treasure you are wearing so carelessly in those rich wild tresses of yours?"

"Yes, your Highness, I do know it; these pearls are the remnant of a great property," I replied, endeavouring with all my might to steady my voice, and give it a calm ringing tone. "My poor grandmother said, when at her desire they were tied round my neck, that they had witnessed much domestic happiness, which, however, had fled before the persecutions and martyrdoms which Christian

intolerance had heaped upon the Jews—for my dear grandmother was a Jewess, your Highness, a Jacobsohn of Hanover, by birth."

I had uttered the last words with marked emphasis in a loud voice, and looked up at the same time at Herr Claudius. . . . What did I care that Herr von Wismar hemmed in embarrassment and glanced shyly at the Princess, while Fräulein von Wildenspring made a gesture of triumph, as though she wished to say: "Was I not right, when my aristocratic nose scented the burgher element in this little mortal?" What did I care that the handsome Tancred bit his lip fiercely and with a gesture of disdain whispered some words in Charlotte's ear?—Did I not see the start of joy with which Herr Claudius's face shone?—I almost thought he was going to stretch his hands out to me and draw me to his strong, proud heart, because I had overcome my false shame, because to win back *his* respect, I had bravely faced the disdain of the aristocratic party.

"Ah, that is indeed a very piquante discovery," exclaimed the Princess, merrily, and perfectly unembarrassed. "Now, I know how my little favourite comes by this thoroughly oriental profile. . . . Yes, no doubt, it was just such a raven-tressed maiden, with just such quicksilver feet, that persuaded Herod

to give her John the Baptist's head. . . . The next time you come to me, I should like to hear more about your interesting grandmother . . . do you hear me, child?" She wound the string of pearls still tighter in my hair and twined her fingers gently in it. "I am sincerely fond of this little Rebecca," she said, "with her pure child's mind and little chattering tongue," she added, with deep fervour, as she bent down and kissed me.

Ah, my chattering had not been altogether harmless on this occasion as he, whose glance never left me, knew too well.

The Princess drew me down on a little stool at her feet, and there I remained, silent but attentive, till Fräulein Fliedner came and announced that everything in the front house was ready. The royal lady had begged a cup of tea might be prepared for her in the interesting old house, her sufferings from rheumatism forbid her remaining too long in the moist warm atmosphere of the conservatory. She wrapped her fur round her, and taking Herr Claudius's arm, preceded the gaily chatting party through the snow-clad garden. The accompaniment of a lantern bearer was not necessary,—the clouds in the sky had dispersed, and the light shone through the moaning poplars, throwing fantastic shadows on the snow—the moon rose.

I crossed the bridge once more and looked up at the windows of the library. The curtains were not yet drawn; the lamp on my father's writing table was burning quietly, and in the opposite corner of the great dark room, near the stove, where the supper table was laid, I saw a pale, blue flame flickering—it was the spirit lamp under the tea kettle. That looked comfortable. Still further I slipped into the house, up the stairs, and listened at the door; my father was no doubt writing. Completely reassured, I returned to the front house.

On that day the old familiar spirits of the Firma. Claudius must have hidden themselves in some corner,—such an illumination would never have been allowed by the noble old merchants, even at the christening of a future chief.

"What on earth has come over the master to-day, Fräulein Fliedner? he can't have light enough," grumbled old Erdmann in amazement, and laying a ladder against the wall of the upper corridor as I came up the stairs. "I must actually hang up here the two great lamps from the business premises."

"Let it be so, Erdmann," said Fräulein Fliedner, who just then came out of the salon—a real flood of light streamed from within. "I am delighted that the light is breaking forth once more in the old Claudius house." She stroked my hair with

a gentle meaning smile and passed on into the hall.

That smile brought the blood to my cheeks. I let my hand fall timidly as I was about to open the door; I felt as though I could not possibly face the blaze of the countless wax lights just at that moment. I went into Charlotte's room. It was empty; two lamps burned on the open piano, and the clatter of cups and saucers was audible from the salon, where the handsome Lothar's portrait was, as well as the sound of speaking. I was still standing there thinking how I could make my entry, so as to attract least attention, when I heard a rustling in the next room and Charlotte entered, accompanied by her brother.

"The Princess wishes to hear me sing," said she, tossing over her notes. "How did you get in here and where did you hide yourself till now, little one?—You were missed yonder."

"I was anxious about my father and went to see after him—he is not well."

"Not well," laughed Dagobert, softly, already seated at the piano, preluding. "Oh yes, a very bad and serious indisposition is his! I heard this interesting piece of news at the club already—nothing else was spoken of, and the cry of delight is running through the town like wildfire, that this

archæological mania is now on its last legs. . . . In a short time we shall have a new style of things here, Charlotte. Thank Heaven, one is not called on any longer to break their jaws with Grecian, Roman, and Egyptian gibberish—it was hard enough." He ran up and down the keys with both hands, breaking into brilliant runs, while I stood paralysed with the shock.—"And just at the moment when your papa's position is shaken, you select with such delicious *naïveté* to relate that he is descended directly from the Jews—that will complete his downfall."

"Yes, that was a little blunder, don't take it ill if I say so," said Charlotte, laying a piece of music on the piano. "I don't want you just to tell a lie, I wouldn't do that myself,—but under such circumstances one can observe a middle path—one can keep silence."

Dagobert began the accompaniment and immediately after Charlotte's powerful voice was heard.

What had happened? All that the handsome Tancred had been saying had sounded so obscure, accompanied as it was by his own careless and mocking laughter, interspersed with innumerable trills and cadences. I looked at the wretch with indescribable bitterness. He had termed my father's work "the archæological mania"; he, who had bored

the renowned man as his subservient "familiar," and often enough been a grievous trouble. This much I understood, that my father's position at Court was shaken, and that the cowardly plotters, who had formerly been among his flatterers, were now turning against him in his fall. . . .

The Princess had never been so kind or so affectionate to me as on ~~that~~ evening, and yet I could not bring myself at that moment to approach her again. I slipped into the adjoining room and hid myself in a dark corner, while Charlotte's powerful voice sang on. . . . From my position I could overlook the tea table quite well. The Princess sat sideways under Lothar's picture, not in accordance with her own wish certainly, for I saw her frequent but furtive efforts to get a full look at the portrait. On her left sat Herr Claudius. One glance at that calm and noble face soothed my angry, anxious heart. . . . What radiance shone this evening on his brow! . . . The splendid head of the soldier, as it hung above it, with its expression of soul, may have had handsomer features and a more strikingly ardent expression,—but of what use had all his warrior's courage been to him? He had not been able to engage in the struggle of life—the wicked self-destroyer had fallen, while the calm resigned one yonder had seized the half-torn rud-

der with one powerful effort and thus saved himself. . . .

"You have a fine voice, Fräulein Claudio," said the Princess, when Charlotte returned to the tea table at the conclusion of her song. "It reminds me especially in the middle tones of my sister Sidonie's *mezzo soprano*. . . . Your animated ardent delivery, too, reminds me of bygone days—my sister preferred wild and original compositions to the simple ballad."

"If your Highness will allow me, I will sing such a wild and original melody," replied Charlotte, quickly. "I delight in the Tarantella—it intoxicates me. . . . '*Già la luna*' . . ."

"I beg you will *not* sing the Tarantella, Charlotte," interrupted Herr Claudio, with quiet gravity. His voice did not falter, but a deadly pallor overspread his face, and he frowned portentously.

"You are quite right, Herr Claudio," said the Princess eagerly. "I share your antipathy. This Tarantella was completely the rage in my day,—it was the stalking-horse of every professional singer; and Sidonie, too, to my annoyance, was passionately fond of singing it. Its style is too bacchanalian for my taste."

She pushed away her cup and rose. "I think we will set out now on a voyage of discoveries,"

she said, smiling. "I want to examine this singular old-fashioned establishment thoroughly for once—it seems to me as if I were reading out of some very old book every time I raise my eyes. . . . Herr von Wismar, do you see that magnificent stag's head wonder? . . ." she pointed to the most distant of the long range of apartments. There is something to please you!"

The Chamberlain immediately wandered off and the young lady with him. Her Highness wished to be alone. Just at this moment Charlotte turned her head, so that I had a full view of her face; at sight of those strained features, that flickering restlessness and passion in the eyes, I knew at once that the young girl had decided on effecting her object, if possible, that evening. Just now, indeed, she was dutifully following the two Court puppets by her brother's side to the deer's head so imperiously pointed out by the noble lady, while the Princess remained alone in the small room adjoining the salon, apparently intensely interested in the sufferings of Genoveva as depicted in the splendid colouring of the old tapestry.

"Do you know where Fräulein von Sassen is, Fräulein Fliedner?" enquired Herr Claudius, who was just entering the room where I was.

"Here I am, Herr Claudius," I replied, rising.

"Ah, my little heroine!" he said, coming rapidly towards me, and forgetting that others around us would notice this unwonted animation in his voice and movements. . . . Fräulein Fliedner drew back at once and busied herself at the tea table.

"You have buried yourself in the very darkest corner to-day, just when I wished to flood my Haide-prinzesschen, with all the light the old house could yield," he said, in a suppressed voice. "Do you know too that in these precious hours I have been celebrating a kind of second birth. I was very young indeed when I condemned myself to walk in the discreet paths of age for evermore. Roughly and ruthlessly I quenched the springs of youth in my heart—I didn't *want* to be young any longer—and now, when in reality I am no longer so, these same springs have broken forth once more and demand their rights, their ancient and inalienable rights . . . and I have yielded to them. I am indescribably happy at feeling myself young once more, as though that precious gem within my breast had remained untouched either by time or unfortunate experiences. Is not that foolish of 'the old, the dead old man' you first saw in the Haide?"

My head sank upon my breast, which was heaving with agitation. The anxiety about my father, dread of Charlotte's doings, the people by whom

we were surrounded, all, all fled before the soft tones half whispered in my ear . . . and he, with his piercing glance, no doubt he read what was passing within.

“Lenore,” said he, bending over me, “we will fancy we two are totally alone in the old mercantile house, and have nothing to do with all those over there”—he pointed to the other room—“I know for whom your brave confession this evening was intended. I take the joy of that moment entirely to myself, lay claim to it myself against the whole world, yes, in spite of yourself, if the old self-will tempted you to deny it. Our souls touch, even though you may long enough resist in yielding me up the hand which once threw my money at my feet.”

A few rapid steps brought him to the piano and, immediately after, tones such as threw me into a kind of ecstasy fell upon my ear . . . and these exquisite harmonies were inspired by me, an insignificant little being . . . they had “nothing to do with those” whose conversation was wafted to us from the distant chamber. . . . Yes, high rose the liberated springs of youth in the heart which had suffered so sorely, which had sought to atone for a brief period of mighty passion by the sacrifice and resignation of life’s happiness and life’s enjoyment. And those

hands, which had "never touched the keys since," now began the air, expressive of the secret link which bound his mature and powerful mind with my weak, vacillating, childish one,—

"Oh, wert thou in the cauld blast  
On yonder lea;  
My plaidie to the angry airt,  
I'd shelter thee!"

"Good Heavens, is not that Herr Claudius playing?" said Fräulein Fliedner, coming into the salon, and clasping her hands with joy at sight of who was sitting at the piano.

I passed by her, I could not possibly let her see my face. I hid myself in one of the deepest recesses of the windows, behind the thick, heavy silk curtains, which I drew together, all but one little slit,—thence my cheeks might glow and my eyes peep out in happy peace. None troubled themselves about me, not even Fräulein Fliedner, who had sat herself down in the remotest corner, and yielded herself up to the delight of listening.

For one moment the salon remained empty. Every tone, even the faintest, floated towards me, a burst of laughter occasionally reaching me from the room with the deer's head.

Suddenly the Princess crossed the threshold. I saw how she breathed freely at finding herself at last alone. She took the shade off the lamp standing

on the tea table, so that the light fell directly on Lothar's portrait. Once again she gave a hasty and suspicious glance round that and the adjoining room, then stepped up to the picture, drew a book from her pocket, and with the utmost rapidity drew a few pencil lines on the paper. She evidently sought to catch the outlines of the handsome head, or perhaps only "the eyes so full of soul."

I started in my hiding place, for all at once I saw into the noble lady's proud heart, and said to myself that she would give years of her life if she might call the portrait on the wall her own. . . . No one could have sympathized more fully with her at that moment than I; the happy one to whom that "other soul" was speaking in touching melodies. . . . I felt as though I must spring up and seize both book and pencil to conceal them, for she did not hear the steps approaching through the whole length of the rooms; she did not look up as Charlotte passed noiselessly up the room, casting a sidelong glance at her, and started back in blank amazement as in the pianoforte player she recognized Herr Claudius. Before I could myself foresee it, she had softly closed the door, so that the music was heard more faintly—then, with a few steps, she stood behind the Princess.

The noise at last caused the distinguished sketcher

to look up . . . the crimson of terror overspread her whole face, but she recovered herself with inconceivable rapidity, closed the book, and cast a glance of proud indignation over her shoulder at the disturber.

“Your Highness, I know that I seem guilty of an inexcusable intrusion,” said Charlotte . . . every nerve in the strong, self-possessed girl’s frame trembled; I could hear it in her voice. . . . “It is a favourable moment, which I have boldly seized without permission, in order to speak to your Highness; but I do not know how to accomplish it otherwise. Even if your Highness would grant me an audience at any time at the castle, I believe I should not find the courage to say that which beneath the shelter of those eyes” . . . she pointed to Lothar’s picture . . . “I venture trustfully.”

The Princess turned to her now in unfeigned surprise and said, “And what have you to say to me?”

Charlotte sank on her knees, seized the noble lady’s hand and pressed it to her lips. “Your Highness, help my brother and me to our rights!” she entreated in a half choked voice. “We are deceived as to our real name, we have to eat the bread of dependence, while we have the fullest claims to a considerable fortune, and might have been long

independent. . . . Proud, noble blood flows in our veins, and yet we are bound with chains to this Krämer house, and compelled to share in its burgher life."

"Stand up and collect yourself, Fräulein Claudio," interrupted the Princess; Her Highness's very grave demeanour was not encouraging. "Tell me first, *who* deceives you?"

"It will not cross my lips, because it looks like black ingratitude . . . the world knows us only as the adopted children of a large-hearted man . . ."

"I also—"

"And yet it is he who is robbing us," Charlotte broke out in despair.

"Stop—such a man as Herr Claudio neither robs nor deceives. I should far rather suspect you to be guilty of a grievous mistake."

I should like to have sprung out and embraced the lady's knees for that speech.

Charlotte raised her head—it was evident she was gathering up all her courage. With a rapid movement she also shut the door, through which came the sound of a lively conversation between Da-gobert and the maid of honour. "Your Highness, this is not a question of money—that is quite another matter," she said decidedly. "Herr Claudio is fond of property, but I am myself thoroughly

convinced that he would reject any such unjust acquisition. . . . On the other hand, your Highness will admit, that many a fine character has by the passionate following up of an idea, an obstinate, blind view of something, been led first to deceive themselves, and afterwards to commit crimes against others."

She pressed her hand to her breast and took a deep breath, the wondrous melodies soaring aloft yonder the while . . . after the lapse of long years the pent-up soul was unsuspectingly bursting forth in thrilling tones, and here was his stainless name brought in question, and I durst not even warn him, but must hold out on the rack. How I hated the accuser over there at that moment!

"Herr Claudius despises the nobility; he hates it, indeed," she continued. "He is, as a matter of course, powerless to shake those that exist, but wherever opportunity offers to prevent the strengthening of the aristocracy, he does it with all his might; and, indeed, on that point, he does not hesitate to use deception itself. Your Highness, a new member of the aristocracy arose at my brother's birth, and I say it with pride, another firm support to the foundation of the widely envied caste: for we, my brother and I, are aristocratic out and out . . . but for that very reason we must never learn who it was that gave us life. Herr Claudius

will not tolerate the coat of arms beside the old burgher name."

The Princess's face became suddenly pale as death. She raised her hand quickly and pointed to Lothar's picture. "And why did you specially wish to tell me all this under the shelter of these eyes?" she said, in an altered, husky voice.

"Because they are my dear father's eyes, your Highness—I am his daughter."

"It is a lie—a horrid lie—don't say that again," she exclaimed. How dreadfully her amiable face had changed, how hard and sharp was the gesture with which she raised her arm! "I will not suffer a stain upon his name. . . . Claudio was never married, the whole world knows that . . . he never loved anyone, never . . . oh, Heaven, do not rob me of this one comfort!"

"Your Highness . . ."

"Be silent. Do you really wish to maintain that he forgot himself, that proud, incomparable man, and even if it *is* true, can you advance *that* as a right?"

With painful scorn the trembling lips enunciated these last words.

Charlotte had sunk back, speechless from amazement, but the insult struck her like a blow in the face and gave her back her resolution.

"He never loved," she repeated. "Does your Highness know why he incurred death of his own freewill?"

"From sudden dejection—he was ill—ask everybody that knew him," she murmured, covering her eyes with her hand.

"Yes, he was ill, he was mad with despair at the death of . . ."

"Whose death? ha, ha, ha!"

Charlotte sank once more upon the ground, and embracing the Princess's knees, while tears of anxiety streamed down her cheeks, said,

"Your Highness, I implore of you to listen to me but for one moment more calmly. I have gone too far now to draw back. I *must* speak out the truth for my brother's sake, for I dare not let you rest in the belief that we are illegitimate children.... Lothar von Claudius was married privately . . . his nuptials were celebrated and blessed by the church, and he lived in honourable wedded love in the Carolinenlust . . . we were born there."

"And who was the happy one whom he so fondly loved that he ventured on death for her sake?" enquired the Princess, in unnatural calm. She stood there like a marble statue, and the words came toneless from her lips.

"I cannot find courage to utter her name," said

Charlotte, as if exhausted. "Your Highness has received my communications, too, too ungraciously. I dare not venture farther. That man over there," she pointed backwards over her shoulder towards her own room, "above all things must not know that I am acquainted with the secret. . . . Have we not lost our anchor without that, when your Highness turns away from us, deserted and persecuted beings . . . I have formerly trembled at every passionate word or sound, fearing it would penetrate yonder . . . I know you will not hear the name calmly . . ."

"Who told you that, Fräulein Claudio?" interrupted the Princess, drawing herself up. Charlotte's last words had sufficed to call up all her latent pride. "You are on quite a false track, if you ascribe my momentary haste to aught save unbounded astonishment. . . . What is it to me who the lady was? I would spare your mentioning her name, but that I wish to prove to you that I can listen to it *very calmly*; and therefore I command you to close your confessions with this name."

"Well then, your Highness, I obey. The lady was . . . the Princess Sidonie von K."

She had miscalculated her powers, the proud Princess. She had fancied she could have preserved the contemptuous smile upon her lips, command the

blood in her cheeks, no matter how the name might sound . . . and now it fell like a flash of lightning on her head, and she sank back against the wall, and groaned aloud, as if a knife had gone through her breast.

"That is indeed the cruellest deception a woman was ever guilty of," she breathed forth. "Shame! shame! how black and false!"

Charlotte offered to support her.

"Begone, what do you want?" she burst out angrily, throwing off the young girl's hands. "Some demon must have suggested the fiendish thought to you to select me, me of all people, for your confidante. . . . Begone . . . I give you back your confidence. I don't want to have heard anything, nothing whatever, for I never can, nor ever will, have a hand in helping you to your so-called rights."

She rose, but was compelled to support herself by leaning upon the table. "Be good enough to call my attendants, I am very unwell," she commanded, in a feeble voice.

"Forgive me, your Highness," Charlotte entreated, beside herself.

The Princess pointed to the door, silent but imperious, as she sank into the nearest armchair. Charlotte fled from the room and immediately after it was filled with people, rushing in hurriedly. The

music also ceased with one shrill chord. Herr Claudius entered.

"An old attack has come upon me suddenly," she said, smiling faintly at him. "I have cramp in the heart. Will you lend me your carriage? I cannot possibly wait till mine comes."

He hurried out and in a few minutes conducted the suffering lady downstairs. She leaned heavily on him, but the way and manner in which she took leave of him fully proved that Charlotte's communications had failed to affect her high esteem for him in the very faintest degree.

### XXX.

I MADE use of the general confusion and consternation to effect my escape; and wrapping myself in my hood and cloak left the front house. My knees still trembled and the blood coursed feverishly through my veins—the scene had been a dreadful one. . . . The unparalleled imprudence I had been guilty of in thus mixing myself up in the private relations of the Claudius's I now bitterly repented in its unavoidable consequences. Link by link the chain of circumstances was made to pass before my eyes, and a malicious hand seemed to be always

drawing me into a participation and sympathy with the various phases of its development . . . I had been compelled to hear him, for whom I would willingly have shed my heart's blood, charged with a flagrant fraud. Every word had been to me like the stab of a dagger, and filled me with hot resentment against his accuser; and for all that I had been forced to remain in my hiding place with clenched hands and streaming eyes. Yes, at that very moment I felt crushed by an oppressive weight of shame. Had I not once sought at Court, in presence of the Princess, just as Charlotte was doing then, to slander the unsuspecting man with all my might? Had I not then openly declared with cruel courage that I could not endure him? . . . And were I to serve him all my life long as a menial, never could I atone for all my childish delusions against him. . . . These thoughts drove me out of his house into the deadly stillness of the garden. . . . Could I but have wandered on thus on the smooth broad road further and further, till I reached the Haide, where Ilse and Heinz were just now calmly seated beside the large earthen stove. Could I but have seated myself on the little stool near Spitz's shaggy coat, and felt once more as in the by-gone, quiet, homely winter evenings, Ilse's dear, hard hand upon my head, perhaps peace might

have returned to me. Peace! It was only now I began to learn the value of that inward and outward calm; only now, since the wild beating of my heart had driven me restlessly hither and thither—now raising me up to Heaven, then casting me down again in an abyss of bitter self-reproach and remorse.

The garden was now bright as day; the crescent moon stood out in sharp relief like silver against the cold blue sky. I crossed the bridge. Beneath it lay the frozen river, winding between the leafless bushes, and the branches in the bosquet shone with a silvery gleam. The stony Titans on the pond no longer stood on a blue velvet ground; they were supported now by a gigantic diamond formed of ice, and they had turbans of snow surmounting their bearded faces, while the gauze draperies of the frozen Diana were bordered with a thick hem of white fur. Every outline of the little rococo-castle had been delicately painted by Frau Holle's white pencil, and she had laid a large, spotless, white pillow on the balcony in front of the glass-doors . . . with what childish innocence I had made my first acquaintance with the secret of the sealed chambers. I only saw in it a fairy tale! And now it represented a handful of papers, which were concealed there, and from which two people of unlimited

ambition expected that the golden, magic door would in very deed be thrown open, which was to pour the treasures of the world all smoothly into their lap.

I looked up at the library windows. The lamp was still burning on the table, but a shadow kept passing to and fro upon the ceiling—it was my father's—he seemed to be more uneasy and excited than ever. Greatly alarmed, I sprang upstairs—the library was locked. Between the incessant pacing which measured the room, I could hear a suppressed muttering, and my father striking his clenched hand upon the table so that it creaked.

I knocked at the door and begged him to open it.

"Leave me alone," he called out roughly from within, without coming near the door. "Forged, did you say?"—He uttered a wild laugh.—"Come here and prove it . . . but take away your sticks . . . why do you strike my head? . . . Oh, my brain!"

"Papa, papa," I called out anxiously.

I repeated my entreaty to be let in.

"Go—don't torment me," he answered impatiently, wandering further away in the room.

I was obliged to obey, unless I would excite him still more, and retired for the present. I lighted the lamp downstairs in his room and prepared everything for the night . . . there lay the papers he had

received after dinner that day, laid together and evidently untouched; there was only one, which he had crumpled up into a ball and thrown on the ground. I unfolded it and immediately saw a red line marked along a long article. The name of Sassen struck me at once among the letters, and filled me with a foreboding of terror. I ran over the commencement, but could not understand it; it was a mass of technicalities. But now its meaning flashed upon me and quite crushed, I shaded my eyes with my hands.

“This medallion swindle has given a tremendous blow to faith in so-called ‘authorities.’ One of our very first names has been thereby compromised for ever. Doctor von Sassen, with singular blindness has recommended the forger and his medallions—of which not one are real—to the several Courts and Universities. . . . Professor Hart of Hanover, who was the first to discover traces of deception, says, indeed, that the forgery is a masterly one.”

Professor Hart of Hanover! That was the professor who used the strange words by the graves of the Huns; the man with the good countenance and tin case slung across his shoulders. . . . I had taken a fancy to him, because he had so manfully defended my beloved Haide, and now this almost childlike, mild old man had turned into an armed opponent

of my father's, and thrown him from the saddle, as Dagobert had said this very day. . . . And that was the medal, for whose purchase I had demanded my money in such an unbecoming manner from Herr Claudius—and on his but too well-founded refusal I had denounced him at Court as one who would fain appear to be the best informed in everything! . . . I saw him again at that moment, as he stood looking so wisely yet modestly at his own medal, maintaining his own opinion so quietly but decidedly.

And because knowledge oftentimes disdains to display her powers before the world at large, he had allowed himself to be shamelessly reproved by Dagobert and I, like a grateful echo, had repeated his words . . . how victoriously justified the proud silent one was now! . . . It was this very medallion business which had now led to my father's fall at Court; and that was what the pitiful creature, Dagobert, had been darkly and mockingly hinting at this evening. . . . My poor father! This one error sufficed to pull him down from his high position, and place him at the mercy of his enemies and enviers.... That was surely sufficient to disturb the brain of one who toiled day and night incessantly in the interests of science.

How weak I felt, in my young, inexperienced nature, face to face with this sad misfortune. I under-

stood very well, that at such a time even the best beloved voice could not help to bring a man comfort—and what indeed could I say to him? . . . but I dare not leave him alone; I must let him doubly feel the watchful, silent love which guarded without making itself a burden.

Hastily I left the room, intending to run upstairs and not cease begging for admittance till he opened the library door to me. Suddenly I paused and listened—a noise proceeded from my bedroom, as if furniture was being moved,—I tore open the door; a flood of moonlight dazzled me as I entered, for both windows were open,—in my excitement at my aunt's arrival I had forgotten to shut them, and close the shutters. With a shriek I bounded backwards; a man held the fatal press in his grasp, and shoved it aside with repeated pushing, so that the little door was fully disclosed to view. He turned round and disclosed Dagobert's white forehead; his eyes sparkled at me. With one bound he was across, shut the door behind me, and drew me further into the room.

“Be rational now for once and reflect that my life's happiness, and *your's* also, is hanging on this moment,” he whispered. “Charlotte made a regular mess of the whole thing—she told our secret to the Princess, and blurted out the whole matter. The

worst thing that could have happened to us is this resurrection of a mad passion on the part of her old Highness, who won't allow my father to belong to another, even in his grave. . . . Now, we have *two* opponents to struggle against, who may very possibly be in secret league—such an insane old maid would trust the devil. . . . Who can guarantee us from finding one of these legal seals fallen off some fine morning? It wasn't my uncle did that—not he—everyone knows how he guards these same seals so sternly. It can fall off quite accidentally, and then if the papers in the writing table should vanish, who in the world is to know anything about it? . . . don't be a child . . . here is the key in the door; I only need to turn it—it is no breaking in, if I just go up and bring away in safety what belongs to me of right.

I know not myself how it was practicable to me at such a moment to glide behind him with such lightning speed, turn the key in the door, and put it in my pocket.

“Serpent!” he hissed between his teeth. “You wish to sell yourself dear. You think, with this key in your pocket you are *still* more attractive for me.”

At that time I had not the faintest idea what these odious words meant, or how could I have vouchsafed the wretch another glance.

"I wish to keep you back from doing wrong," I said; putting my back decidedly against the door. Be open and true with Herr Claudius; you will attain your object much more easily thus than if you were to break the lock upstairs. I will go with you, and this very hour we will tell him everything . . ."

I stopped, for his eyes were scanning me in an offensive manner, and a mocking laugh played round his mouth. "You are beautiful, Barfüsschen!\*" The little lizard with the Princess's crown has turned into a Siren during the last few months,—but where is the wisdom of the serpent gone?" He laughed aloud.—"A charming position truly, by Zeus! We should walk up in *propria persona* into my uncle's very presence, present him our secret on a salver, and retreat with long faces!" He approached me nearer, so that I drew myself still closer up against the wall. "Now, let me say one thing to you; I still restrain myself, and do not attempt to touch you; you have to thank the extremity of my weakness and my secret adoration of you for that. I will not give you cause for excitement, for I know you are a mischievous little devil; . . . I believe that in such moments, through sheer obstinacy, you are

\* Little bare-footed one.

quite capable of denying what I, happy one, have long known! . . .”

What did that mean? I must have looked very much astonished, for he laughed again. “Oh, don’t look as if I were the Wolf, and you Red Riding-hood, looking at the villain with innocent, interrogating eyes!” he exclaimed. “Things have been made much more disagreeable, indeed, to-day—your inconceivably busy tongue, which in both our interests I had already endeavoured to curb, has proclaimed the stain of your Jewish descent; your papa has also made his position at Court untenable . . . but my passion for you is superior to all that; I think, too, that my mother’s princely mantle will suffice to hide much,”—he almost touched my ear with his lips—“and then I will see my charming little Lenore, who—”

Now I understood him;—and how bitterly did I rue the day that I had adopted the brother and sister’s cause with such blind enthusiasm; I turned away my face and lifted my arms above my head, so as to form a kind of shield from him.

“Ah, there is the demon again! Are you not going to strike me?” he muttered between his teeth. “Take care . . . I told you already . . .”

“I know very well that you could strangle me with one squeeze of your hands—do it, then,” I cried fearlessly. “Of my own free-will I will not deliver

up the key.—You are a robber—I am no longer the ignorant child that saw in those”—and I pointed to his glittering epaulettes—“simply an ornament—I know they should be worn only by the honourable.” And here comes a haughty officer, under the cloud of night and mist, and threatens a defenceless maiden.”

“Oh, the little viper is trying to sting,” he said, throwing his arms round me; but my litheness came to my assistance: shrieking aloud, I slipped from his grasp, and jumped on the window-sill.

“For Heaven’s sake, what is the matter?” called out old Schäfer—he was on his way home, and was just crossing the white snowfield.

“Come, come up, quickly,” I stammered, half between tears and joy at being set free.

Dagobert disappeared with one spring out of the opposite window, while the old gardener ran along the front of the house and made his appearance immediately after.

“What was the matter?” exclaimed he, looking round the room in astonishment. “My goodness, my dear young lady, you look just like a canary, after the cat has been in the room. Perhaps there was a noise in the old house? Don’t be afraid, though it is only the mice, miss. There are no ghosts, however much all people may declare it is ‘not all right’ in the *Carolinengl*.”

I left the good old man, who endeavoured to soothe me so kindly with his gentle voice, under the impression that it was some imaginary phantom which had thus terrified me, and only entreated him to shut the shutters as tightly as possible; then I locked all the doors and went up again to the library. . . . I felt myself so weary of struggling—the last remnant of the obstinacy and self-will with which I had faced the new world, and of which I had had a full share, was exhausted—and I was still so young, so very young! . . . Was life then one such eternal struggle with irrevocable consequences brought on by one's own errors? And must my troubled, youthful soul for all future time, thrown on its own efforts, go stumbling on helpless and without support through storm and darkness. I shuddered with horror—if some pitying hand were not stretched out to me I must sink in fear and distress. “My plaidie to the angry airt—I’d shelter thee!” Ah yes, to be hidden, to be able to fly thus with wounded pinion beneath the care of some stronger power, and shelter there! . . . How I had over-estimated the strength of those childish hands, because they had been able to brave the Haide storm so merrily!—but how wearily they sank down already, groping for some support or stay.

The library was still locked when I went up,

and knock and rattle as I would; I could get no answer. At first I thought my father had left it, it was so deadly still within. But soon after I heard in the distance a kind of rumbling followed by a burst of laughter—the noise came from the antique cabinet, whose doors were standing wide open. It sounded to me as if heavy, solid masses were being thrown down, and the laughter was so unnatural that it made my hair stand on end. . . . Next something was thrown into the library and broke into a thousand fragments on the floor . . . a cry of absolute triumph followed this ruin. . . . I bounded with clenched hands incessantly against the door, and repeatedly called my father in despairing tones.

Just then a door opened on the broad staircase, and Herr Claudius came out of the observatory—the moonlight shone as bright as day behind him. I hurried towards him, and amid convulsive efforts, imparted to him my state of mental anguish and distress. A deadly silence had succeeded the noise which I heard in the library, and while that lasted I related with down-cast eyes and in a whisper the story of the medallion.

“I know it already,” interrupted Herr Claudius, quietly.

“Misery is setting my father mad,” I said. “Oh, how I suffer for him. He is branded now, and has lost his famous name since last night.”

“Don’t believe *that*. It would be sad indeed, if a single error could suffice to undo the work of a whole lifetime. . . . Herr von Sassen has rendered incalculable benefit to science, and that is just the reason why these hornets try to sting him the deeper in the hour of his distress . . . that will pass by. Calm yourself, Lenore, and do not cry.” He raised his hand as though about to take mine in it, but let it fall as quickly, and stepping to the library door, rattled at the handle.

Just at that moment there was a noise on the floor within of crashing and rolling.

“You are no Agasias,” shrieked my father: alas! I scarcely recognized this loud voice—“Sassen has lied. Ask Hart in Hanover, he knows it. . . . Away with you, you *too* are false.” One could hear him distinctly kicking the fallen object about.

“Oh, that is the sleeping boy, his idol, about which he has been writing whole volumes to prove that it is one of Agasias’ works,” I said, trembling. “Oh, Heavens, he is smashing the antiquities.”

Herr Claudius knocked loudly at the door.

“Won’t you open the door to me, Doctor,” he called aloud, but with a perfect, self-controlled voice.

My father uttered a loud laugh. “And it is written—ha, ha, that it has all been lies from the very beginning. Beware, if you are an immortal

spirit; see!—how the red flames devour you! . . . Ha, there they are whirling towards the ceiling, the whole brood of lies, of which the celebrated man was so proud!—smoke, nothing but smoke!”

Herr Claudius drew back in horror. Thick smoke and a suffocating smell began to issue from the key-hole and the hinges of the door,—some woollen material was burning.

“He is burning his manuscript,” I exclaimed, “and the curtains have taken fire.” I broke into a loud lament and threw myself in despair against the door—alas! what availed my poor little hands and feet against those solid panels, which never stirred.

Herr Claudius rushed back into the observatory, and just then I bethought me of a small, almost invisible door in the library; it led into a large dark lumber room, which separated the former from the observatory. And even if the door was locked, two good kicks would suffice to break in the fragile planks. But that was unnecessary; rapid steps within, and an angry cry from my father, informed me that Herr Claudius had effected an entrance without any resistance. The key had been turned and the door just thrown open. What a sight! . . . Smoke and vapour and roaring flames between, with showers of crackling sparks, enveloped my father’s familiar

writing-table. "The red tongues" shot up but slowly at the heavy, woollen curtains, but all the merrier did they lick up the piles of old pamphlets, which filled a shelf between the windows. My father shrieked and behaved like a madman—he fled from Herr Claudius, who sought to lay hold on him and lead him from the room. Under the poor retreating one's feet the shattered fragments kept incessantly crunching,—the floor was covered with remnants of precious antique terra cotta vases.

I ran in.

"Back, Lenore, back! remember your inflammable dress," exclaimed Herr Claudius anxiously, while he barred my father's way, who was seeking to throw himself into the flames. "Run to the front house for assistance."

As I hastened off, I saw my father stumble over the marble figure lying on the floor, and raised in Herr Claudius's arms, who, despite his frantic resistance, bore him to the door; but I had scarcely reached the hall when I heard the two gain the stairs, still struggling.

"Murder, miserable murder!" shrieked my father, till the walls rang again: then ensued a frightful sound, like something falling.

To this day I cannot tell how I regained the *bel-étage* with my powerless limbs; I only know that

I felt as if suddenly caught up by a whirlwind and thrown down where I saw a heap lying on the lowest step of the staircase.

Herr Claudius had already regained his feet; he was supporting himself against the banisters, and turned his face, on which the moon shone, towards me—it was deadly pale.

“We unfortunately fell,” said he, still breathless from exertion, and pointing to my father. “He is unconscious and I cannot carry him further. My poor, poor Lenore, your feet can scarcely carry you, and still you *must* bring me aid. . . .”

Then I rushed through the garden; behind me the fiery tongues from the library windows kept darting out, and thick, black clouds of smoke enveloped the tops of the trees.

“Fire in the Carolinenlust!” I called out in the hall.

In a moment the whole front house turned out. Universal horror seized everybody when, on reaching the yard, they saw the glowing red reflected in the quiet silvery sky, above the row of poplars. Whoever had hands, “seized tubs and buckets, and two great engines were fetched out of the coach-house. The fire had been observed in the neighbouring streets also; streams of people came in, one after another; and in a short time the whole space before

the Carolinenlust was covered with people to the rescue, who broke up the ice in the river and pond, and bore water to the blazing story.

When I returned Herr Claudius was leaning against the banisters; he pressed his left arm with his right against his breast. I was speechless with sorrow, and bent over my father, whose head rested on the lowest step. Herr Claudius had made him a pillow of his cloak. His eyes were shut, and the sunken cheeks looked so bloodless and pallid, I thought he must be dead,—groaning, I hid my face in my hands.

“He is only stunned, and as far as I could possibly ascertain, he has broken none of his limbs,” said Herr Claudius. How I learned to value that calm, composed voice in those hours of anxiety and suffering; that very voice whose calmness I had once mistaken for iciness. At its sound I looked up at once.

“Downstairs, in Herr von Sassen’s own room,” it said to the people, who lifted my father from the ground. “It stands far apart,—the house is massive, and there is water and helping hands enough—the fire will not penetrate thither.”

A stream of people brushed past us upstairs.

“And you?” I said to Herr Claudius, and we walked side by side, and the two men, conducted

by Fräulein Fliedner, carried my father to our apartments. "I see very well you are suffering, you have hurt yourself . . . and, Herr Claudius, how severely you are rueing having taken my father and me into your house?"

"Do you think so?" An almost sunny smile for one moment banished the knitting of his brows, caused by pain. "I calculate otherwise than you think, Lenore. I understand the arrangement perfectly, according to which we must first go through various probations, ere we reach our heaven . . . with each we approach our aim more and more nearly, God be praised!"

He went on up to the burning story and I went to my father. He lay on his bed still and motionless; only when a fire engine came thundering over the bridge and stopped before the house with a loud noise, he opened his eyes and looked around him, evidently quite unconscious. From that moment he kept incessantly whispering to himself, soft and low. Fräulein Fliedner laid cold cloths on his head, which seemed to have a tranquilizing effect upon him. Help and assistance did not fail us. Even Frau Helldorf, who since that fatal Sunday morning had never ventured to enter the Claudius garden, so far overcame her nervousness and fear of meeting her father, that she had come up to me.

I sat beside the invalid and held his burning hand in mine. His strange muttering, which never for a moment ceased, the sight of his suffering face, from which all trace of independent thought seemed for ever vanished, and in addition the intense anxiety I felt about Herr Claudio, who I knew was upstairs in the burning rooms—all this contributed to put me in a state of silent despair.

A shaded night-light was burning in a corner of the room; deep shadows surrounded the sick bed; and the light through the window shone all the brighter. Yonder, over the silvered row of trees, the heavy clouds of smoke waved like a banner; the sparkling streams of water rose hissing from the fire engine out of the midst of the human turmoil.—To my consternation they sank down and fell only to rise with renewed majesty. . . . “Take care,” perpetually resounded above the tumult and hum. . . . Rescued objects, such as vases, mirrors, marble statues, were being carried past and laid beside the Diana. . . . Huge piles of books were ranged beside the goddess, and the furniture and table-slabs looked strange enough on the snow-white, wintry landscape.

The intensely black volumes of smoke gradually dispersed and rose like a veil before my fixed gaze—the noise of passing up and downstairs grew fainter, —the carrying past of things to be saved ceased.

"The fire is extinguished," said Frau Helldorf, drawing a long breath; and I buried my streaming eyes in the pillows.

Charlotte entered. The skirt of her dress trailed along the floor, her heavy plaits hung down in disorder;—she had toiled like a man at the rescue.

"That has been a nice evening for us, *Prinzen-schen*," she said dejectedly, as she sat down on a little footstool near me, thoroughly exhausted. She rested her forehead against my knee. "Oh, my poor head!" she whispered, as the two ladies left the room for a moment. "Child, if you knew how I feel! . . . I tell you the desperate idea occurred to me up there, if it would not be better that the fire should devour me and my clothes and put an end to the torment here" . . . she pressed her hand to her heart . . . "and I passed those sealed doors, thinking one of them *must* give way, and my mother stretch out her arms to her unhappy child, and draw her in out of the way of the swarm of human beings around. This day for the first time I have felt it impossible to forgive my father for having left us so confidently in his brother's hands resting on his truth and faith. . . . And no matter how fearfully he might have suffered, he *ought* not to have died, he should have lived for us . . . he acted in a cowardly manner!"

The crowd of people outside were gradually disappearing, it grew quieter, and the hissing of the streams of water, which were still sent up from time to time, struck more sharply on the ear. At length the longed-for physician made his appearance. While he was examining the patient and watching silently, a powerful voice was heard outside in the lofty corridor and finding its way into the silent room.

“Did I not know, Herr Claudius, that this bringing to light of heathen goddesses and statues, which had been wisely consigned to oblivion by your predecessors, would prove an offence to the Almighty?” said the old bookkeeper in his most sonorous tones.

“It is the incorrigible old fanatic,” murmured Charlotte, in a tone of vexation.

“Did I not foretell that the fire would fall from Heaven?”

“It didn’t fall from Heaven, Herr Eckhof,” replied Herr Claudius, impatiently.

“You misunderstand evidently, dear sir,” said another voice, gently.

“Oh, that is that abominable deacon, the greatest baiter of souls in the whole Residenz—both have just come from their devotions, as one may hear! The fire in the Carolinenlust is the greatest triumph for them,” whispered Charlotte.

“Brother Eckhof knows very well that punish-

ments are not sent thus direct from Heaven in these days as formerly," continued the voice; "but it acts always just as certainly—only it depends upon our understanding it. . . . Yes, Herr Claudius, it pains me to my heart, that you should be thus visited; but I cannot forbear at the same time to admire the wisdom which in such inexhaustible mercy thus speaks to you. In wisdom and justice this has happened, that the heathen abominations called works of wonder might be destroyed, which I have just seen lying, disguised and blackened by smoke, in the garden."

Before he had finished his sermon Herr Claudius, without a word, opened the door of my sitting-room and entered. The doctor joined him. Herr Claudius stood near the table, on which the lamp was burning, and the light from which fell full on his face—he still pressed his left arm against his breast with the left, in that strange manner. I saw from my dark corner how his face overclouded at the doctor's report.

"You are suffering also, Herr Claudius," I heard the doctor say to him at last.

"I have hurt my arm," replied Herr Claudius, "and will put myself into your hands yonder at the Vorderhaus."

"That's right;—and your eyes must be kept in

the dark for some time, I perceive," he said, emphatically.

"Not a word about that—you know that is my weak point, where you can make me anxious."

My heart stood still—if he should grow blind?... I fancied no human heart had ever suffered so much misery and wretchedness as I had that day.

Charlotte rose quickly and went away. The door of my sitting-room was opened almost at the same time, and men's footsteps came in in haste.

"Herr Claudius! Herr Claudius! . . . Oh, this villany!" I heard the old bookkeeper moaning. He came within reach of my eye—all his unction, every trace of his pious, holy walk before God and man seemed washed out of that discomposed, disturbed countenance.

Herr Claudius signed to him to lower his voice, but he was far too much excited to notice this movement.

"That to me, to me!" he said, in a frenzy of indignation. "Herr Claudius, some wretch has taken advantage of the general confusion at the fire to break into my rooms and rob me of the box containing my poor savings. . . . Oh, I can scarcely keep my feet. I am worried beyond measure. You will see, it will be my death."

"That is a sinful and unchristian speech," said

the deacon, gently reproving his violent outbreak. "Remember, it is but the earthly mammon . . . besides it is not at all impossible that the thief will be discovered, and that you will get your money back again, and if not, you must remember what Scripture says upon the subject. 'It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.'" I saw how his eye rested on Herr Claudius as he said, "Is not that a precious consolation to those who are tried by the loss of earthly goods?"

"But the thousand thalers of the missionary money were in the box too, and they are to be paid in in the next few days," said the unfortunate book-keeper, tearing his nicely arranged hair.

Now it was the deacon's turn for alarm.

"Oh, that is indeed very much to be lamented, dear Herr Eckhof," he exclaimed; "but may I ask, how you could leave this money entrusted to your care — forgive me — so unwarrantably carelessly guarded? You know that the welfare of other souls hangs on every penny. What shall we do now? . . . the money *must* be paid in in a few days. Our society is a model of punctuality and must not lose its good name on your account. . . . You will, I am sure, see that. . . . I am unutterably grieved, but with the best will in the world can do nothing to help you.

You *must* provide the money by the appointed time."

"But, oh, how is that possible? At this moment I am a beggar!" He held his white hands towards the lamp. "I haven't even my diamond ring, the precious gift of my former master, to dispose of, it was in the box too. I always take off that piece of vain, worldly ornament when I go to my devotions. Oh, my Lord and my God, how have I, Thy faithful servant, deserved this fate!"

The deacon approached him nearer and laid his hand soothingly on his arm. "Well, well, do not despair, my dear Herr Eckhof. The matter is grave enough—one cannot overestimate it; but I will tell you . . . one who, like you, possesses such a powerful patron may take courage. Herr Claudius is a rich and noble man: it is a mere trifle to him to aid you in your distress. He risks nothing in so doing . . . he has you and your salary in his own hands, and can easily repay himself by deducting it."

"I should first have to reflect upon that, I assure you, Mr. Deacon," said Herr Claudius, quietly. "In the first instance, I never allow that kind of thing, and then . . . you maintained just now that the Almighty in His wisdom and justice had permitted the destruction of the finest monuments of human genius created by Himself, the blossoms of a glorious

culture . . . well then, I will for once place myself in your position,—will think of and interpret the Almighty's actions after your limited and one-sided view, and say that He has in His wisdom and justice permitted that the money should be lost, which was destined to compel some heathen's soul to embrace Christianity; . . . such a doubtful convert costs a thousand thalers probably . . . and further it will teach you, Herr Eckhof, the lesson, that the church, for whom you have sacrificed what is holiest of all . . . your family . . . is the most ruthless of creditors in money matters."

He looked with dignity and pride over his shoulder at the little deacon, who sprang waspishly at him. "We must be ruthless; it is our sacred duty," he said, zealously. "What would become of the church, if we did not gather and work and save while it is day . . . and the harder it is to obtain the mite, the greater the toil, and the severer the poverty incurred, the more pleasing is it in the sight of the Almighty. . . . You are one of us, Herr Eckhof, you know what rules we are compelled to obey, and will, I doubt not, sacrifice everything to procure the money. . . . I wash my hands of it. I have done more than I was called on to do, I have humbled myself before the unbelievers."

He walked stiffly to the door.

Frau Helldorf then approached her deeply dejected father.

"My father," she said, in a quivering voice. "I can help you. You know I have seven hundred thalers from my late mother, and the remainder I can get from my brother-in-law, who has saved a little capital."

Eckhof turned round, as though those gentle tones had been crushing and loud as thunder. He looked into his daughter's face like one petrified; but suddenly pushed her away.

"Away, away with you! I will none of your money," and stumbled out after the deacon.

"Calm yourself, my good lady," said Herr Claudius, in a soothing tone to the weeping one. "That was all that was wanting, that you should add your mite into this insatiable abyss. I was compelled to be hard. One cannot be too severe with this presuming caste . . . but take courage . . . all will yet be well."

While they were all talking to each other, he came across to the sick room where I was. He bent over my father, who, utterly unmoved by all which was going on around him, kept murmuring monotonously on and on.

"He is happy in his fantasies; he is in sunny Greece," whispered Herr Claudius to me after a pause . . . he was standing close to me;—suddenly

I caught his right hand in both of mine and pressed it to my lips . . . my offence, my former rudeness to him, was atoned for.

He literally staggered back, . . . he never uttered a word, but he laid his hand on my head, pushed it back, and looked enquiringly into my eyes . . . oh, how heavily did the lids lie over those beautiful, blue, starlike eyes!

"Is all right between us now, Lenore?" he asked at last in a half choked voice.

I nodded my head vehemently in assent, without remembering the dark secret that lay between us.

### XXXI.

My father lay for several days hanging between life and death. The attack of delirium, which was the cause of his setting the Carolinenlust on fire, did not, as I at first apprehended, proceed from insanity; but was the first outbreak of a nervous illness, which had been for days progressing unobserved. The dangerous state in which he lay could not be concealed from me, so I sat day and night by his bedside, thinking in my old self-willed fashion that death could not dare to extinguish the faint spark of life beneath my watchful eyes. . . .

If he really was scared away by the maidenly soul's threatening aspect, I know not—but the angel of death passed by, and after a week of indescribable anxiety, the doctors pronounced the invalid out of danger. In addition to Frau Helldorf, a strong nurse also assisted me, and the Duke's household physician, whom His Highness himself had sent, remained for hours 'at the Carolinenlust, watching over "the precious life of the famous man." . . . It now became apparent that it was a very erroneous supposition, that the Court at K. would be so affected by the medallion affair as to cause my father's fall from favour—the Duke had never been kinder or more sympathetic than during this trying time; several times a day his messengers came to make enquiries after the invalid's health, and with them came an inroad more or less of servants from the once more cringing Court coterie.

A sick room had been arranged in the front house also—a dark, heavily curtained one. . . . Herr Claudius had sprained his arm severely in that fatal fall; and in addition, the stifling smoke and dazzling flames had brought on inflammation of the eyes, of which the doctor at the commencement had formed a very bad opinion. I suffered indescribably, for I was not allowed to see him. But when the physician allowed me to leave the sick bed, and sent me into the open

air for a breath of freshness, then I rushed to the front house and never rested till Fräulein Fliedner came out and gave me a report in person. . . . In the midst of his severe sufferings, however, he never forgot his little Lenore. The window-sills and flower-stand in my room were perfect beds of violets, lily-of-the-valley, and hyacinths—and I always felt on entering as though buried in spring odours. The doctor was of opinion that the next thing would be that Haideprinzesschen would fall a victim to a poetical death from these overpowering odours. Schäfer confided to me, grinning, that it looked awfully bare in the hothouse, and that the head gardener cut a very long face. Frau Helldorf, the doctors, the nurse, everyone in short who wanted to get a breath of air out of the sick room, flew to the deliciously decked chamber; one person only regarded it with unfavourable eyes, and that was my aunt Christine.

As long as my father lay there unconscious, she came to visit me daily. I must confess I always trembled when I heard the sound of her light uncertain footstep; her first appearance at the sick bed had deeply pained me. With the most graceful turn of her beautiful head, she had whispered me, after the first glance at the sunken, suffering face: "child, prepare yourself for the worst,—

he is rapidly approaching his end." Since that time I had been afraid of her. Anger and vexation however overcame me one day when she came into my room.

"Oh, how heavenly!" she exclaimed, clapping her white hands. "Darling, you must have a remarkably good allowance, to admit of indulging in such an unusual luxury."

"I did not buy the flowers—Herr Claudius ordered the room to be decked thus," I replied, much offended. "I, indulge in luxury indeed!"

She turned round, and I saw for the first time that these splendid, dove-like eyes could look daggers.

"It is *your* room, Lenore?" she enquired, in a cutting tone.

I assented.

"Oh, child, then it is a mistake of your's; well, well, that is very pardonable, you are still but a child," she said, resuming her good-humour, stroking my hair with a smile, and passing her velvety fingers over my cheeks. "See, old Schäfer is such a fool about flowers,—no doubt it is he who has crammed your room this way to suffocation—but, you rogue, it seems to me you have a stone in your sleeve for him. . . . A man like Herr Claudius, so grave and preoccupied with past sorrows—I have learnt that from you and Frau Helldorf—would

never think of overwhelming such a little—don't take it ill, little mouse—such a tiny hop-o'-my-thumb with the choicest bloom of his hothouses."

I remained silent and swallowed down my ill-humour. Her opinions might well have cast me down, for beside her Juno form there was no denying that I looked one of the most insignificant of beings—that could be fancied; but the flowers came *notwithstanding* from Herr Claudius, and I knew it to a certainty, although I hid the sweet consciousness deep within my heart. . . . My aunt did not enter that room again; she said even the momentary stay in the hothouse atmosphere had given her a violent headache. . . . It was strange, but this beautiful woman with her soft voice and fascinating manner did not succeed in ingratiating herself at the Swiss cottage. Old Schäfer always made me a reproachful face whenever I mentioned aunt Christine, and said his pretty clean little room was a complete show . . . the lady never touched a duster, and didn't seem to know the use of the nails on the wall; she left her clothes lying on the floor. And Frau Helldorf was seriously angry one day when she saw me giving my aunt money.

"You are really committing a sin," she said, when we were alone again; "because you are busily supporting laziness and extravagance . . . the table

upstairs is covered with all kinds of dainties,—the woman ought to be ashamed of herself, eating oysters and potted eel, and having bottles of Champagne hidden behind the sofa, and all that paid for by you! . . . You cannot possibly continue that . . . let her earn her own bread by giving singing lessons,—her voice is gone, but her school is first rate."

To my own comfort I was able to assure her that that would certainly take place; aunt Christine had repeatedly said that she had decided upon a plan, but would require the advice and support of a man to enable her to carry it out, both of which she had hoped to get from my father; but as he had thrown her off so unkindly she would await Herr Claudius's recovery—from all she could hear of him, he was just the man to be able to give her advice and support in a longer stay at K. I saw nothing objectionable in the idea, and was a little indignant when Frau Helldorf shook her head and said she thought Herr Claudius would scarcely meddle in the matter when once he had seen her painted face.

The little woman had become inexpressibly dear to me during my time of trouble. What a sacrifice she had made in entering the house where her unforgiving father dwelt! Literally flying, she always arrived breathless and terrified—the fear of another

such meeting haunted her. The poor thing loved her father tenderly notwithstanding, and was deeply grieved to learn that he had disposed of everything he possessed to meet the missionary debt. In spite of every effort no traces of the thief had been found.... To me the old bookkeeper seemed greatly altered; every time he met me now he greeted me, and had even come over occasionally to enquire for my father. Charlotte was of my opinion; she maintained angrily that he kept out of her and Dagobert's way; that "the old fool" decidedly repented having betrayed his master's secret, and in the end—she fore-saw that—at the decisive moment he would endeavour to deny all. . . . The passionate girl suffered deeply. The Princess was unwell, and since that evening had kept herself aloof from all the Court bustle, and the house in the Mauerstrasse seemed to have dropped from her memory. What was to be done now? My repeated suggestions to Charlotte to tell Herr Claudius everything were met by her with irritation and the remark that the perfume of the flowers in my room had got into my head. From that time I preserved silence.

Five weeks were at last past since the accident at the Carolinenlust, and terrible trials now lay behind me. My father had long left his bed; he recovered with amazing rapidity; had been cautiously

made acquainted with the past occurrences by the doctors, and had received the intimation that his manuscript was destroyed with wonderful equanimity. The news that a number of books and manuscripts of great value had not been saved, and also that the finest specimens of terra cotta vases had been destroyed, and that the utmost efforts to find the missing hand of the sleeping boy had proved unavailing affected him much more painfully. He shed tears of sorrow and was with difficulty calmed when he thought that he had been the unwitting means of robbing Herr Claudius and the world of this priceless treasure. The Duke visited him very often; he was thus led back unconsciously into his usual train of thought and action, and had already formed innumerable plans and designs. . . . He treated me with indescribable tenderness—misfortune had bound father and daughter more closely still together—he could not bear me to be out of his sight,—nevertheless he assured me frequently and gravely that he would send me for a month to the Haide in the beginning of spring—I had grown too pale and needed refreshing.

It was a dull afternoon in March. For the first time for five weeks I intended to visit the Swiss cottage. My aunt had written me a few lines, re-

proaching me for my persistent neglect of her now that my father was recovering. Charlotte met me in the hall. I was frightened at the sight—such a wild outbreak of joy and triumph I had never yet seen in mortal face. She took a paper from her pocket and held it before my eyes.

“There, child,” she said, breathlessly; “at last the sun is rising upon me, at last! . . . Oh!—” she spread her arms out as if to embrace the whole world,—“look at me, little one, . . . happiness looks thus! . . . To-day for the first time I dare say: my aunt, the Princess. . . . Oh, she is indeed good, noble! . . . thus to have conquered herself could only be done by—the nobly born! . . . She writes to me she will see and speak to me,—to-morrow I am to go there. Should our claims be established—I should like to see who will be so bold as to dispute them—then everything will be done to restore us our rights,—she has already spoken to the Duke about it—do you hear?—to the Duke,” she said, seizing my arm and shaking me. “Do you know what that means?—We shall be recognized as the Princess Sidonie’s children and enter the reigning House as members of the family. . . .”

A shudder ran through me—the decisive moment had arrived.

“Will you really bring the matter forward while

Herr Claudius is still suffering?" I enquired in an unsteady voice.

"Ah bah!—he is quite well again. The thick curtains have been removed from his windows; he is wearing a green shade and has moved into a little curtained parlour next my room for the first time to-day. He has treated himself to a little private amusement in presenting Eckhof, whose birthday it is, with a thousand thalers in the loveliest little purse, as compensation for the missionary money, and that he may be able to release his goods. The old man was overcome to that degree that I almost died of fear lest he would have fallen at my uncle's feet and confessed his blabbing before our very faces—happily his emotion prevented his finding words—besides I had become hard, hard as a stone. I have suffered too much in these last few weeks; from Dagobert too, I have had to listen from morning to night to the bitterest reproaches at my 'awkward way of managing the matter.' I do not know of anything now which can hold me back; and if my uncle were summoned to the bar at this very moment I would not raise a finger to prevent it."

She accompanied me as far as the garden gate: from thence I saw her fly like an arrow into the leafless thicket—the intense joy which filled her

breast, drove her to the top of the hill, where she could give vent to her rejoicing over the wide world. I should have liked to turn back again and hide myself in the darkest corner of the Carolinenlust, to conceal my pain and anxiety about Herr Claudius.

I slipped past aunt Christine's room on entering,—to my astonishment the barking of a dog issued from it—and ran upstairs. In the Helldorf rooms my beating pulses always became tranquilized . . . . cries of joy met me. Herr Helldorf stretched out both hands to receive me, Gretchen seized me round my knees, and little Hermann sat crowing on the floor and tossing his little feet, begging to be taken up. The little mother, however, rapidly produced the coffee machine and a piece of cake specially laid aside for me, and soon after we were all seated in familiar conversation round the table. . . . Now and then a bold cadence struck in; runs and trills clear as crystal interrupted our conversation—aunt Christine sang or rather trilled below; it sounded beautiful; but as soon as ever she attempted to bring out a tone fully, and sustain it, it went to my heart . . . that voice which had once, no doubt, been perfectly enchanting, was completely cracked.

“That lady downstairs ought to seek occupation as soon as possible—she leads the life of a sluggard,” said Herr Helldorf, frowning slightly; “her singing is of

an excellent school, and I am quite ready to get her pupils—she can earn a great deal if she likes. But the hauteur and the scornful smile with which she thanked me for my kind patronage I can never forget. Since then she has not appeared here again."

"Blanche is barking—there is some one coming, Mamma," said Gretchen.

"Yes, Blanche;—that is a new inhabitant of the Swiss cottage, which will be introduced to you, Lenore," said Frau Helldorf, smiling. "Your aunt bought a charming little dog for herself the day before yesterday. Schäfer is beside himself; he cannot endure the mischievous little animal."

She paused suddenly and listened; a man's footsteps were heard on the stairs, crossing the ante-room and pausing a moment there. Frau Helldorf's face had become white as snow; she stood there holding in her breath, motionless as a statue, and looking as though she could not advance one step to open the door. All at once the handle of the door was turned—it opened, and a tall fine-looking man stood on the threshold.

"Father!" shrieked the young woman—it was a cry of mingled sobbing and joyous exultation. Eckhof caught her in his arms and pressed her to his bosom.

"Anna, I have been hard—forgive me," he said, in a trembling voice.

She could not answer,—she only buried her face still deeper in his breast, from whence she had been so long shut out. . . . The old man extended his hand silently to his son-in-law; Helldorf grasped it firmly for a moment, the tears springing to his eyes, strong man though he was.

“I will give you my hand too, grandpapa,” said Gretchen, standing on her tip-toes and trying to reach her grandfather’s height.

The children’s sweet voices at last made the young mother look up. She flew to her boy, picked him up off the ground and held him up to her father, “Kiss him, papa,” she said, still wavering between smiles and tears. “Gretchen you know, but not the little fellow; and only think he has my beloved mother’s large, blue eyes—oh, my father!” and she flung her left arm anew around his neck.

By that time I had reached the door and slipped out noiselessly. Notwithstanding my familiarity with the Helldorf family I felt that at this moment, when the breach which had so long divided the father and daughter was closing, I had no business in the little circle—the penitent ought not to feel a stranger’s gaze upon him in that consecrated hour. But it had grown light within my soul—as light as with the people yonder, on whom, strange to say, just as I was escaping, a single pallid ray of evening sun-

shine broke forth from the dismal March sky, lighting up the silent spectators on the wall, as though even they would fain revive and share in the blessing of reconciliation. . . .

My aunt was lying on the sofa as I entered her room; the little fury, Blanche, received me with vehement barking and buried her teeth in my dress. I gave her a light tap on the head, at which she fled to her mistress's lap yelping.

"Oh, you mustn't strike my little pet, Lenore," exclaimed my aunt Christine, half entreating, half pouting. "Look, now, you see Blanche is angry with you, and you will have a great deal of trouble to win back her heart."

I thought to myself that was a trouble I would never take.

"Look, isn't it a little darling?"—She stroked the really beautiful little animal tenderly, and pushed its long silken hair out of its eyes. "And just think I got it for a mere nothing—the man who sold it to me was in want—I gave four thalers for it; that was literally getting a present of it, was it not?"

In my extreme amazement I could find no words—I had shared my purse honestly with aunt Christine lately—she had got eight thalers.

"I had just such a little dog once before—a splendid specimen—it was a gift of Count Stetten-

heim's and cost more Louis-d'ors than this little one cost thalers . . . there could not have been a prettier sight than that shining pale yellow creature on its blue silk cushion . . . the poor thing was choked in the end by a partridge bone."

She chattered away thus, smiling all the time. The beautiful dimples in her cheeks were more than ever visible in these smiles, and I could not help looking with ever new admiration at her delicate, regular teeth, which shone like pearls between her rosy lips. The head of this beautiful woman was dressed irreproachably, but her attire on the other hand really shocked me. A cast-off violet dressing-gown covered with stains hung loosely over her lithe figure, and from the opening at the throat and the holes in the elbows, appeared a night-dress of very doubtful cleanliness. The state of the room completely harmonized with this toilette. In the middle of the room lay a pair of dirty white satin shoes, which had evidently been degraded to the rank of slippers, and to serve occasionally as toys for Blanche. The once shining tables and drawers were covered with a thick coating of dust, and pillows and articles of dress were thrown together in disorder behind the curtains—the air, however, was filled with the most delicate and delicious scent of violets.

"You find me in the greatest possible disorder,

do you not?" said she, catching my glance. "I didn't want to annoy you and add to your trouble, when I visited you — you had enough care on your young shoulders without that. But now I may venture to tell you that I feel inexpressibly wretched shut up between these four walls. . . . Schäfer is an arrant fool—such a man has not the faintest idea what a woman like me, who has been honoured by the whole world and petted and spoiled on all hands, he has no idea I say of what I am accustomed to expect. Instead of seeing that my room is properly cleaned every day, as is usual in lodgings, he expects me, if you please, to dust his furniture and sweep the room!—he may wait long enough for that."

She put her hand into a basket and took out a handful of almonds and Messina grapes, and began cracking the almond shells.

"Take some too," she said to me, giving Blanche at the same time one of the grapes. "It is little indeed I can offer you . . . however, a rogue gives more than he has . . . one of these days it will be another story, and then you shall see what charming little dinners I can arrange . . . *à propos*, to return to Schäfer . . . the sleek old hypocrite can be very churlish too. Only think; when I was buying Blanche the day before yesterday, and counting out the money to the man, he warned me in the most

shameless manner that I should first pay him for the arrears of rent, and the expense he had been at for light and firing during my stay here—but that is not *my* affair, darling, is it? . . . *you* rented it for me, didn't you?"

I grew fiery red from anxiety . . . how was this to end? If I were to write for Herr Claudius from early morning till late at night I could not possibly obtain a maintenance for my aunt. . . . Ilse's face rose before me; how often had I thought in my inmost heart that the faithful old soul was hard and unforgiving, because she had sought with all her might to prevent any approach between aunt Christine and me—now I had got into the difficulty, and rued it.

"Aunt, I must tell you candidly that my means are very small," I replied, in great embarrassment, but still very plainly. "I will be quite open with you and confess at once, that my father does not even know,—that I earn the housekeeping money almost entirely by writing the names on the seed-packets for Herr Claudius."

She looked at me at first amazed and doubtful; then broke into a peal of laughter. "Oh, such are your poetical relations to each other? . . . that is rich, and I was so absurd as to cherish a momentary fear—no, little one," she exclaimed gaily, "that will

cease when my position changes one of these days, you may rely on that. *I* won't allow it then. *Fi donc*, how shameful! . . . You will see how *I* will manage the man . . . copying, that is indeed a hard business, and it is impossible I can live on your purse any longer . . . but what to do? . . . Child, I am counting the minutes till this Herr Claudius is well once more and 'able to see me."

"He left his sick room for the first time to-day."

"And you only tell me that now?" she said, half rising from her recumbent position. "Don't you know that you are delaying the happiness of my life every moment you lose. . . . Have I not repeatedly told you already that I will lay my future in this honourable man's hands, and on his advice and decision make my weal and woe dependent?"

"I don't think he will be able to advise you one bit better than Herr Helldorf, aunt," I said; "Herr Claudius lives quite withdrawn from society, while Helldorf has introductions into the very best families as a teacher. He told you himself, some time ago, you could earn a great deal of money if . . ."

"May I beg," she said in a freezing tone, "that you will keep your wisdom to yourself! . . . It is *my* affair as to how I will open my path, and I must confess that I have no inclination whatever to form any kind of connection with the people upstairs;

cease then to propose anything of the kind to me. They are the kind of cit-like acquaintances, which afterwards hang about one's neck like lead, and—in short, child, they are eternally removed from that sphere which I have been accustomed to live in . . . and now I again entreat you to do everything in your power to procure me an interview with Herr Claudius."

I rose, and she glided from her sofa, slipping her feet into the satin shoes, which gave me an opportunity of observing that she wore flesh-coloured silk stockings.

"Oh, you little mouse of a thing," she said, raising her slight figure to its full height and stretching her arm out over my head. We were standing exactly opposite the glass, and I involuntarily looked in it—my bronzed, Creole complexion, though spotless and adorned with the freshness of youth, looked nevertheless to great disadvantage beside the peachy cheeks and brilliantly white forehead of my aunt; but I also saw for the first time to-day very distinctly the repulsive varnish which lay in a thick coating on her face. I felt ashamed for her sake when I thought of Herr Claudius's keen quick glance making the same observation; but as often as I tried to beg she would lay it on somewhat less palpably, so often did I find it impossible to utter a word, more

especially as she kept calling me a little brown hazel-nut, and wondering at my smooth gypsy skin, inasmuch as the Jacobsohn's had always been blessed with lily complexions.

I withdrew myself from her coaxing hands, and left the room with the assurance that I would go direct to Fräulein Fliedner and advise with her as to the possibility of the interview.

I was set free with a fervent kiss.

### XXXII.

“My dear little Lenore, your very best plan would be to speak to Herr Claudius himself,” interrupted the old lady, before I had got through the half of my mission.

“Can I speak to him, then?” I enquired, anxiously.

“Of course; . . . go upstairs into the front room where Lothar’s portrait is . . . a great many have been up there to-day already—the salon is a temporary business room.”

I went up. At the door, however, I paused a moment to still my beating heart, which I thought would burst—then I entered softly. The room was not so dark as I had expected. The windows were

shaded with some kind of green stuff, which shed a soft and pleasant light. Herr Claudius sat in an armchair, with his back to me; he had a green shade over his eyes, and was leaning back against the cushions . . . he did not appear to have noticed my entry, or thought perhaps it was only Fräulein Fliedner, for he did not alter his position in the least.

My deepest, warmest wish was now fulfilled. I saw him once again!

I could not speak. I was terribly afraid of the first sound of my own voice in the quiet room. I approached him, almost inaudibly, nearer and nearer, and grasped his left hand timidly in mine, as it hung over the arm of the chair . . . the fair head still remained immovable in its former position, but quick as thought the right hand closed also on mine, and I felt myself all at once a prisoner.

“Oh, I know to whom the little brown hand belongs, that twitches so timidly between my fingers, like a nervous fluttering little bird,” he said, without stirring. “Didn’t I hear it coming upstairs, and every step saying distinctly: ‘Shall I go in or not? Shall pity for the poor prisoner win the day, or the old refractory spirit that says: wait till he can leave his cellar and come to me?’”—

“Oh, Herr Claudius,” I interrupted, “I was not refractory, indeed.”

He turned his face towards me quickly, without letting go my hand.

"No, no, Lenore, I know you are not," he said, in husky tones. "Those around me had little idea why I was always so impatient of the slightest noise at the twilight hour, and imperiously requested the profoundest silence. At that hour I listened with supernatural ears, or at all events a longing heart, —for I knew to a moment when the little maiden's feet left the Carolinenlust; I followed every step through the gardens and up the stairs, and listened with eagerness to the half-whispered, 'How is he? Does he suffer much?' . . . That sounded anything else but refractory; and then I saw the unruly locks shook back with the well-known gesture of the head, and the dear, large, naughty eyes gazing at Fräulein Fliedner, while she made her report. . . ."

I forgot everything that divided us, and gave myself up unreservedly to the charm of the moment.

"Ah, *she* did not understand me so well," I said, thoughtlessly. "I longed so inexpressibly that she would bring me to you once, just once. I should have felt more at ease if I could but have looked into your eyes, and they had said to me, 'I see you.' . . . Please, just raise the shade once."

He sprang up, took off the shade and threw it

on the table. His slight figure stood before me, tall, elastic, and upright as ever.

“Well then, I see you,” he replied, smiling. “I see that my little Lenore has not grown an inch in these five long weeks, and the curly head just reaches now as ever to my heart. I see too, that that same head is thrown back just as sturdily and rebelliously as ever. . . . But what can you do against it, if nature choose to see a marvellously tiny fairy child amongst her creations! I see still further, that the little brown face has grown paler with terror, sorrow, and night watches. . . . Poor Lenore, we have much to repay—your father and I.”

He took my hand as though he would draw me gently towards him; the gesture brought all my wicked recollections back again and filled my heart with misery once more.

“I tore myself away. “No,” I cried, “don’t be good to me . . . I have not deserved it of you! . . . If you only knew what an abominable creature I am, how deceitful, false, and cruel I can be, you would turn me out of your house—”

“Lenore!—”

I fled before him to the door. “Don’t call me Lenore. . . . I would far rather you called me refractory, wild, ill-bred; that you would sternly pronounce me unwomanly—only not call me by my name so

kindly and tenderly. I have done you no end of mischief and harm whenever I could. I have attacked your honour and made common cause with your enemies—you will never forgive me, never. I know it so well, that I don't even venture to entreat."

I literally groped for the door-handle. He stood at once beside me.

"Do you really think," he said, "that I will allow you to leave me in this state of violent excitement?—with those pale, trembling lips that make me feel quite anxious?" He took my hand gently from the door. "Strive to calm yourself and listen to me . . . you came hither a perfectly untouched, undisciplined nature and saw the world through your innocent child eyes. I blame myself severely for not having emptied my house of its injurious elements at that time, since I knew in the first hour that a turning point in my life had come, and that everything must undergo a change. . . . It is true, your so plainly expressed repugnance to me made me resigned . . . I was too proud ever again to forget, and confined myself to acting as a warning voice. I hesitated too long in doing what looked unmerciful and yet was the right thing—there was not space for you and Charlotte in my house—*she* must give way. Whatever therefore may have occurred, whatever you may have done unfavourable to me from simple

ignorance of the circumstances, does not need a single word of forgiveness—I am just as guilty as you are. . . . There is only one sense in which you can really give me pain, and that is, when you do as you have so often done already—turn away cold and repulsive from me. No, no, that I cannot see,” he broke off, deeply moved, as I burst into a flood of passionate tears. “If you must cry, henceforth it must be here alone.” He drew me to him and laid my head upon his breast. “So now make your confessions courageously,—I will fix my eyes on the curtain yonder and listen with half-averted ear.”

“I dare not tell,” I said in a low voice. “How glad I should be if I might tell you everything! But the time must come yet, and then—one thing, however, you shall learn now, for I did that quite alone—I slandered you at Court, I said you were a cold-blooded miser, a—”

I noticed how he secretly laughed. “Ah, has little Lenore such a bitter tongue as all that?” said he.

I pushed away the arm that held me and looked up anxiously. “Don’t think that all I did was mere childish prattle,” said I.

“I don’t think so either,” he said soothingly, while the same delicious smile played round his lips. “I will hear all the dreadful discoveries come

on me one by one, and wait patiently for it—then I will be the judge; does that satisfy you?"

I assented.

"But you must submit then unconditionally to the sentence I pronounce."

With a long-drawn sigh I answered, "so I will gladly."

Then I dried my eyes and began to speak of my aunt.

"I have heard of this strange guest from Fräulein Fliedner," he said, "and of her having fled for shelter under the foolish little woodlark's wing. Is she the lady to whom you sent the money?"

"Yes."

"Hm—I don't like that. I have unlimited confidence in Frau Ilse and she spoke very badly of this aunt. How does the lady come to have such a strange fancy to speak to *me*?—What does she want with *me*?"

"Your advice. Oh please, Herr Claudius, be so kind. My father has cast her off."

"And despite of that she wants to live in one and the same place with him, and to run the danger incessantly of meeting him who disowns her—that doesn't please me . . . but, well or ill, I must receive her, because I will not allow Haideprinzesschen to form any connections henceforth, of which I know

nothing, and which cannot stand the test of my searching eye. . . . Frau . . . what is her name?"

"Christine Paccini."

"Well, Frau Christine Paccini is requested to drink tea in the Vorderhaus this evening . . . run now and fetch her! . . . Now, does not my complaisance deserve even a shake of the hand?"

I turned back and laid my hand voluntarily in his. Then I flew away.

I doubt whether I had ever fled even over the Haide, where unburthened with either care or sorrow I had skimmed so many a time, with the same speed as I did over the gravel walk on this occasion. . . . I knew now that I could never again lose my way in the wide world, for *he* would guide me wherever I went. No terror could come near me again, for I would fly to his bosom and shelter me there. How shyly had I drawn back, when he took me in his arms, and what a blessed rest had come over me there!—just so it used to be, when, as a child, I screamed aloud with terror, and Ilse opened her arms to take me to her heart and soothe me.

When I reached aunt Christine again she was busy making chocolate. Blanche was running about on the table, licking up the chocolate which had run over and helping herself from the cake-plate. . . . My,—how chocolate, cakes, and Blanche were all

thrown to the four winds, as I made the announcement that she was invited by Herr Claudius to drink tea at his house! Now I saw for the first time, *how* she had longed for and calculated on this moment. With a half triumphant, half absent smile she kept opening and shutting drawers and boxes I got one glance at the awful chaos of faded flowers, ribbons, and tinsel.

“Darling, of course I must dress myself first and the room is so small—you could go up to the Hell-dorf’s for a little, couldn’t you?” she said. “But one favour you must do me; go to Schäfer,—I don’t want to talk to the unmannerly old man any more—he has splendid yellow roses, let him cut me some and give him whatever he asks for them, even if it be two thalers—you will get it again, perhaps to-morrow. . . . So go,” she said, pushing me towards the door, and as I looked at her interrogatively, “I am accustomed to have flowers in my hand when I make my appearance as a guest,” she explained.

Schäfer gave me the roses and I took them in. Then I went to my father and obtained leave to drink tea at the Vorderhaus.

An hour later I was walking with my aunt Christine across the garden. On my return I had found her already wrapped in her cloak and hood

and closely veiled. It was half dark and a close rain began to fall as we took the road to the bridge.

“Where are the ladies going to?” enquired a voice behind me. It was Charlotte, only now returning from the hill.

“I am going to introduce my aunt to the Vorderhaus,” I replied.

The young lady made no remark and aunt Christine also remained silent, and so we walked quietly beside each other—I felt suddenly very nervous. . . . The two ladies crossed the bridge before me together—strange, it looked almost “uncanny,” so marvellous was the similitude between the two figures—both had the same proud, disdainful turn of the head, the same development of shoulders, the same walk, and in height, I do not think there was a hair’s breadth between them—they might have been mistaken for each other, and yet they inwardly repelled each other; at least Charlotte kept at a distance.

“Pray, take your things off in my room,” she said to me, coldly, in the corridor.

We entered the room, which was already comfortably warmed and lighted. Fräulein Fliedner was arranging the tea-table, and received us with great reserve.

“Where is Herr Claudius?” whispered my aunt

to me—the first word which had fallen from her lips since we had left the Swiss cottage.

I pointed silently to the door of the salon.

“Oh, a piano!” she exclaimed in great delight, and flew to the instrument, which was standing open. “How painfully long have I been obliged to go without such a sight! Oh, allow me, if but for a moment, to touch the keys! Pray, pray—I shall be as happy as a child if I may but strike a chord or two.”

In another moment cloak and mantle were thrown on the nearest chair, and to my unspeakable amazement, aunt Christine appeared in full dress. A rich, white satin fell in long folds upon the carpet, and from the lace which trimmed her very low dress a bust was disclosed to view which, in its dazzling whiteness and exquisite chiselling of form, almost surpassed the Græcian statues in the antique cabinet. Her long curls fell in waves over her neck and bosom, and the pale dewy roses lay scattered here and there through the masses of her blue-black hair.

“That is rather strange,” said Charlotte drily, and without the least reserve. My aunt, however, had seated herself at the piano, the instrument quivered beneath her touch, and immediately after she began singing in a tuneless, but powerful voice,

and with demoniac expression: "*Già la luna in mezzo al mare—*"

Then the door was thrown open and Herr Claudius stood on the threshold, pale as a ghost—behind him was Dagobert's amazed face.

"Diana!" exclaimed Herr Claudius, in indescribable horror.

Aunt Christine flew towards him and sank on her knees. "Pardon, Claudius, pardon," she entreated, almost touching the ground with her forehead. "Charlotte, Dagobert; you, my long lost children, help me to implore that he will receive me back again into his former love."

Charlotte uttered a cry of rage. "Acting," she stammered forth. "Who has paid you for this admirably played part, madam?" she enquired, in a cutting tone. Then she turned on me fiercely and shook me by the arm. "Lenore, you have betrayed us," she shrieked out.

Herr Claudius separated us at once and pushed her back. "Take Fräulein von Sassen away," he said, addressing Fräulein Fliedner. How dead his voice sounded; how he endeavoured to master his fearful agitation!

Fräulein Fliedner put her arm round me and led me into the room where Lothar's portrait hung. The door was shut behind us: the old lady trembled

like an aspen leaf, and a kind of nervous shivering made her teeth chatter.

"You have brought an evil guest into the house, Lenore," she said, listening anxiously to the sound of aunt Christine's voice, which we could hear quite distinctly. "You couldn't tell, indeed, that it was *she*, the false, faithless one; that Diana for whose sake he suffered so sorely. . . . God forbid that she should again establish her power over him! She is still entrancingly beautiful."

I held my head in my hands—the world must certainly crush me!—

"How cunningly she managed it, too!" continued the old lady, in a bitter tone. "How she surprised everybody around with the first lightning-like declaration! . . . All at once she remembered her 'long lost children,' whom she deserted so shamefully."

"Is she really Charlotte's and Dagobert's mother?" I exclaimed.

"Do you doubt it, child, after all you have seen and heard?"

"I thought they were his children"—pointing to Lothar's picture—"and the Princess Sidonie's," I groaned out.

She drew back and stared at me. "Oh, now I begin to understand," she said. "That is the key to Charlotte's incomprehensible manner and be-

haviour; she thinks as you do. She thinks she was born in the Carolinenlust; isn't that it? . . . Well, I shall find out who has discovered the so carefully guarded secret and made such a hair-brained use of it. Meantime, I will tell you that two children saw the light in the Carolinenlust—one died in a few hours; the other when six months old of convulsions—besides they were two boys. Dagobert and Charlotte though are both the children of a Captain Méricourt, who was married to your aunt and who fell at Morocco. . . . Poor child! your good angel forsook you when you took that woman under your protection—she will bring misfortune with her; misfortune to us all!"

I buried my face in my hands.

"When Eric became a visitor at her house, she was already widowed, and prima donna at the great opera house in Paris. Her children were educating at a Madame Godin's,—Eric was as fond of them as if they had been his own children; and although so deeply injured and wounded by their mother, he was so noble as to take the little ones' when the lady, forgetting every tie of honour and of duty, left them at the pension utterly unprovided for. . . . Madame Godin died soon after, and he imposed on me—to whom alone the children's origin was confided—the strictest silence: he wished to spare the

children all their lives the knowledge that they had a degenerate mother—and badly they requite him."

She wrung her hands together silently and paced up and down. "Only not *that*," she murmured. "That voice yonder pleads with veritable demoniacal power—I hear it. How it flatters and complains and softly implores!—she will throw new chains round him."

"Uncle, uncle, oh, I suffer bitterly; . . . I, wretched ungrateful creature that I am!" shrieked Charlotte, in the other room.

I rushed out of the door, down the stairs, through the garden. . . . I was banished out of Paradise by my own fault, my own fault. . . . In spite of Ilse's energetic remonstrances and warnings, against the express desire of my father, I had kept up a secret intercourse with this criminal aunt. I had led the demon of his youth back to the man whom I loved with all the power of my soul; and who would doubtless again poison his whole life. . . .

In the hall where the bright lamp-light fell upon me, I paused in my furious flight—no, I dare not appear before my father in that plight—my hair and clothes all dripping wet from the March rain, which was falling fast and soft; my every nerve was quivering and my cheeks had a feverish glow. I went into my bedroom, changed my dress, and drank

a glass of cold water. I must be quiet, very quiet, if I wished to obtain what I regarded as my sole means of salvation.

My father was sitting in his room in his comfortable armchair, reading and writing alternately, and near him stood a steaming cup of tea. He looked more cheerful and at ease than I remembered ever to have seen him, even before his illness, and the dear, old absent smile had returned once more. Frau Silber, the nurse, was buttering bread and regulating the heat of the room by the thermometer, and she signed to me not to enter too suddenly. She was the very embodiment of carefulness, and I knew I could not leave my father in better hands.

I seated myself near him on a footstool, but so that my face remained completely in the shade. He told me with great delight that the Court physician had been with him, and told him that he might drive out to-morrow for the first time; that the Duke would call for him himself in his carriage. Then he stroked my hair and said he was glad the tea at the Claudius's had not lasted too long, and that I was back with him again.

“But how will it be, papa, if I go for a month to the Haide?” I said, withdrawing still further into the shade.

“I must reconcile myself to it, Lorchen,” he

said. "You must go back for a time, to what I may call your native air, that you may grow stronger —both Doctors have laid it upon me as a duty. As soon as it is warmer—"

"It *is* warm outside, deliciously mild," I broke in suddenly. "Just think, it seems to chase me to the Haide. I feel as if I should be ill and could only ward off the enemy in the fresh Haide air. . . . Papa, if you are really going to allow me away at all, why not this very evening?"

He looked at me in amazement.

"That seems to you like madness, doesn't it?" I said with a faint attempt at a smile. "But it is more rational than you think. The air outside is as soft as possible; I would go by the night mail, and to-morrow evening I should be once more at my dear, dear Dierkhof; I should drink milk and breathe Haide air for weeks, and then return quite strong here—when it is fine, when the trees are in blossom, and then—it is all right, is it not, papa? . . . I can leave you, too, perfectly well in Frau Silber's hands,—she will stay with you, and you could not be in better care—please, papa, do allow me—"

"What do *you* think about it, Frau Silber?" he enquired, undecidedly. •

"Oh, let Fräulein Lorch go, Herr Doctor," said the dear old thing, coming to the door instantly.

"A man should not go against nature, and if the young lady feels as if she would be ill, and that the air of the Haide would cure her, in God's name say nothing against it . . . the night mail leaves in another hour: pack up your things, Miss, and I will take you to the station."

I left the Carolinenlust with hasty steps. It was pitch dark, and my companion could not see the tears which streamed from my eyes, as I nodded a "farewell" to the conservatory, where I had spent one moment of exquisite happiness. I had not meant to look up at the Vorderhaus as we passed through the yard: but what was my will, in comparison with the anguish which raged within, at parting. My eyes hung devouringly on the light that shone in Charlotte's room—they had forgotten to draw the curtains. They were still all assembled there; you could see it by the shadows which chased themselves over the ceiling. He had forgiven her, the faithless one, for whose sake he had once ranged the gardens whole nights long—he had been reconciled to her—it was a day of reconciliation—while the foolish little woodlark, frightened away from his heart, was flying away in the darkness of night!

## XXXIII.

THAT was a meeting again! . . . I wandered on foot from the last village to the Dierkhof—through the silent, leafless wood. It was dark in the thicket, and dried leaves caught in the hem of my dress—they had been fluttering in the early morning as I issued forth into the world; and now they accompanied me like fallen spirits long strips of the way, rustling and whispering monotonously; . . . and as I entered the boundless plain, as the Hünengräber came in view in the evening twilight, as I saw the lights burning in the distance at the Dierkhof and heard Spitz's well-known bark, I threw myself among the bleak, wintry Haide bushes and wept with anguish—I was returning to it miserable and broken-hearted.

And then the four oaks continued ever increasing. I could distinctly see the dark spot in the middle, the old, well-known magpie's nest.—The young birds, which had taken such a lively share in my parting sorrow, were long since fledged and gone; and nothing remained save the old original pair that stayed as sentinels on the Dierkhof watch-tower, and directed their sharp, wise glances towards

the solitary child, which came wandering thither across the Haide. Deep in the dark arch of the doorway, I could espy a spark of fire; the turf was burning on the hearth; and the familiar roof, from which the smoke rose in straight yellow columns towards the evening sky, looked as if it sprang directly out of the ground, so sunken and small did the Dierkhof appear to me now. Suddenly I saw Spitz running like mad across the yard. At the hedge gate he paused breathless for a moment—his ears cocked; then he rushed towards me, and sprang up as high as my very face, whining with joy and trying to lick it—I had difficulty in keeping my feet.

“What’s the matter with the animal? It’s quite crazy,” said Ilse, coming out of the door. . . . Ah, that voice! I ran across the yard and threw myself on her breast—there I thought I should escape from those torments which had chased me like furies through the quiet, solitary Haide. . . . She did not scream, nor did she utter a word, but her arms embraced me closely, and I was petted and caressed as I had never been in my childhood; I felt at once that she must have been longing intensely to see me, and when we entered the fleet I saw she had grown pale.

But Ilse never allowed herself to be entirely

overcome by her feelings. She pushed me away suddenly, and, looking at me at arm's length, said in the same dreaded tone in which she had once laid my childish sins upon my head, "Lenore, you have run away!"

Notwithstanding my inward grief I could not help smiling. I seated myself on Heinz's wooden stool and began telling her of the fire accident and of my father's illness, at both of which she threw up her hands in horror. That did not prevent her, however, from kindling the fire afresh, filling the kettle and putting it on the fire, and feeding me bit by bit with a piece of bread and butter, sorely against my will.

"Yes, yes, that was the wisest thing, no doubt," she said, as I informed her at the end that the doctor had ordered me to the Dierkhof. She then left the room, and soon after led me to a bed shaken up as high as the ceiling.

"So, child—now you must go to bed and I will bring the elder-tea directly. One could see a mile off that you have caught cold on the journey; your face is flushed—and you mustn't speak another word . . . to-morrow you shall tell me more."

At my earnest entreaty I was spared the elder-flower tea; but I was tucked into bed without mercy . . . there I saw Charles the Great's picture

looking down upon me once more. I sprang up, took it off the nail and turned the face to the wall... how I hated it! How much mischief, falsehood and deception lay in the white forehead which had so completely dazzled me at the Hünengräber. . . . It had served to illuminate my path into the dark and unknown world yonder—that deceptive light had all unconsciously to myself lured me onward; it was this which had torn me away from my old home; now I saw into the feelings which had then actuated me—they had blinded me and led me into a path full of errors.

I seated myself once again, as on the night of my grandmother's death, at the foot of my bed, and gazed at the illimitable distance. No; not even at the Dierkhof could I find rest—the deeper and more complete the silence around me, the wilder was the tumult in my solitary heart. . . . Now, I understood why my grandmother used to stand for hours together looking from the corner of the orchard into the wide waste beyond—the veiled eyes sought through that misty distance the lost, degraded one, whom the mother's heart, all deeply wounded as it was, could not forget. And for me too, that broad field of light, bedecked with countless glittering gems of night, all centred into one small point—over the distant, ancient house of Claudio.

The wind was sighing outside and making the dry branches of the mountain-ash tap softly against the window; I drew back and covered my eyes with my hand—just underneath stood the bench where I had first read aunt Christine's letter. And now I had seen her in reality on her knees, that fairy vision; fairer than the fairest flower forms, of which my prettiest books in childhood described lilies and roses becoming transformed into. And from the satin folds two delicate arms had been stretched out to draw the man she had once so deeply injured again to her faithless heart. Involuntarily I beat my breast with clenched hands as I recalled that fatal moment.... I had been weak and cowardly.... I *ought* not to have come away; I should decidedly have laid my head where it had been but a few short hours before,—he himself had assigned me that place and I knew it had been with real tenderness; I had felt it in the beating of his heart and the trembling of his hand, as during my confessions it had kept tenderly stroking my hair. I ought not to have allowed those rosy fingers to touch him; then, perhaps, the wicked spell would not have been thrown around him....

No doubt it was bright at the Vorderhaus now, as bright as on the evening when the Princess was there . . . and he was sitting at the piano. . . . For-

gotten were the days when for her sake *he*, had never touched the keys; she was singing the intoxicating demoniac Tarantella to him once more . . . and within a few weeks a new mistress would be moving through the old Claudius chambers,—not, indeed, with the dear forehead-band, but with a long rustling, silk train, roses in her hair and trills on her lips. The quiet company' rooms would be full of life, guests coming and going, champagne corks flying, and nobody would blame the husband's choice; was she not still a woman "of surpassing loveliness?" . . . Now, *he* would be my uncle. I sprang up and moved restlessly about, quite beside myself.—no, mine was no angel's disposition; I could not smile while the hot tears were in my eyes, I resisted the knife, that was always turned so unmercifully against my breast. I would not return to K., I would implore my father to choose some other place of residence. How could I ever bring myself to utter the word "uncle!" Never, never.

The soft tapping at the window outside gradually turned into a violent pelting and beating, the spring storm was raging over the Haide. Once again I heard the creaking and cracking of the old loft, the moaning and howling round the corners; and in the top of the oaks, the rustling of withered leaves, which though long since dead and mouldy kept falling

with a ghostly noise upon the ash beneath. The old Dierkhof shook beneath the mighty gusts of wind, and in the roof the decayed wooden shutters groaned and the window panes clattered softly, as if the storm were rattling small silver chains in its grasp.

Ilse came in to see how I was getting on.

"I thought as much; I thought you wouldn't be able to sleep," she said, on seeing me sitting dressed upon my bed. "Child, you are no longer accustomed to the old Haide lullaby: yonder among the mountains, of course, the storm grows tame; but I don't like it that way half so well. . . . Go to your warm bed again though—it won't do you any harm."

Of course *it* would do me no harm—the familiar Dierkhof would shelter me from that! . . .

I had now been three days at the Haide, and the storm had raged incessantly day and night over the broad plains. Mieke, Spitz and the poultry, all fled for shelter to the barn, and from that hidden nook gazed from the open door upon the enemy as it flew by. But it blew in warm, and I even fancied that it brought a delicate perfume of sweet flowers with it now and then. Heinz, too, remained at the Dierkhof; Ilse would not allow him to go home in that tempest—but oh, how changed was everything! . . . I no longer read aloud while we sat in the fleet—

the fairy tales had now no charm for me, and tales of my town life were just as bad. As often as Ilse mentioned the name of Claudius—and that to my despair was very often indeed—I felt as if I must choke; I knew that if I once uttered the name myself, all my efforts at self-control would at once break down irreparably, and I should shriek out my sufferings to all the four winds of Heaven, and to the horror of the two faithful creatures by my side. Heinz now looked always shyly at me from afar, and Ilse told me, laughing, that he said I had turned into a real Princess now—so abstracted; and he could not think why Ilse didn't hang up the window curtains and produce the elegant sofa, as had been done for Fräulein Streit.

On the third day the storm abated; it still blew and indeed fiercely over the plain, but I could not endure being in the house any longer. I flew out, despite the whistling and gusts that still rose, and let them carry me over to the hill; . . . there stood the dear old pine still firmly rooted, and as I threw both my arms around it, it sent down a shower of its needles upon my hair. The broom bushes caught my petticoats too; but the spot where the Hünengrab had been opened the previous year lay bare at my feet, and little particles of sand were every now and then blown about where the human ashes had once

been scattered; red streaks from the setting sun hung over the top of the wood—the storm would begin afresh the following morning; it was as if the tumult of the air separated me from the outer world. . . . Yonder ran the river across which the three gentlemen had then sought to escape from the barren Haide; there had the tall slight form of the “old gentleman” trodden through the sand with firm footstep, while the handsome Tancred’s dainty feet had kept anxiously to the velvet grass-path.

It was awfully lonely up there now. I held my hand over my eyes, that I might be able to get a better view of the strange sight—the utter solitude of the Haide! A dark object was moving on the narrow sand-path in the distance, which Heinz had dignified by the name of high-road. Goodness, Ilse had carried out her threat and sent for the doctor! My pale face, my dejected air, gave her the deepest anxiety. The dark object advanced nearer and nearer; the evening red shone upon it vividly—it was the same old trap which had brought the doctor to my grandmother’s dying bed. It gave a swerve—the powerful horse and carriage stood out in sharp lines against the sky; I saw the carriage windows glitter and the driver seated on the box. Suddenly the carriage stopped and a gentleman got out, and though his figure had been carefully shrouded from head to

foot, for all that, I should have recognized it among a thousand by that one motion. . . . My pulses stood still, I clenched my teeth and anxiously watched the carriage door.—Now she, the beautiful lady in the velvet mantle, with the ermine thrown round her shoulders, would no doubt also get out. Uncle and aunt were coming to take back the runaway.—But the door was closed and the carriage turned back towards the wood. Herr Claudius crossed the Haide, and came directly towards the hill—a large cloak fluttered about his shoulders, and the blue spectacles shone in the evening light. . . . I let go my hold of the pine, stretched out my arms, and was about to rush down the hill; but I let them fall again—that was not the way to meet an uncle—staggering, I once more embraced the pine and leaned my head against its rough stem.

The steps were now approaching nearer and nearer—I never moved; I felt as though I were bound to the stake and must hold out in silent agony.

At the foot of the hill he paused.

“Won’t you come one step to meet me, Lenore?” he called out.

“Uncle,” came from my lips.

In a few steps he stood beside me—a smile crossed his lips.

"Extraordinary girl, in what an strange position you have placed yourself! Do you really think a sedate uncle would pursue a little runaway niece in such an anxious and vehement manner?"

He took both my hands very gently and led me down the hill. "So, here the storm will pass over us. . . . I am not your uncle, but I have been with your father and asked him for another right; he granted me leave joyfully to bring you home,—but not to the Carolinenlust, Lenore; if you decide on going with me, then there is but one course for us both. . . . Lenore, nothing stands between us now but your own decision—have you *still* no other name for me?"

"Eric!" I shouted with joy and threw my arms round his neck.

"Naughty child!" he said, holding me fast. "What have you not done to me? Never shall I forget the moment when Fräulein Fliedner came back from the Carolinenlust and told me in terror you were gone—gone with the evening mail!—my little woodlark frightened away in night and darkness. And how I mourned that you were not even conscious of the pain you caused me. . . . Lenore, how could you think it possible that I could just have taken my devotedly-beloved maiden to my

heart to put her away immediately after ~~for~~ the sake of that ugly, painted sin?"

I tore myself away.

"But just look at me," I said, inviting his criticising glance between laughing and crying. "Beside aunt Christine I look just the miserable 'nothing,' that Charlotte always called me. . . . I saw my aunt at your feet; she implored forgiveness,—and in what tones! And I knew too that you had loved this beautiful woman so—"

A burning crimson, such as I had never till now seen, overspread his face.

"I know Fräulein Fliedner has been chattering," he said. "She confessed herself that she was afraid she was the cause of your having fled, from having given expression, strangely enough, to the fear that I might again fall under the same spell. . . . My little one, I will not allow you a single glance into that time, which was succeeded by years of remorse. You shall retain your chaste child's eyes; they are my refreshment, my pride. . . . I erred seriously at that period and misunderstood myself; I confounded the flame of passion with that starry light which first rose upon life's pathway with your appearance . . . the error of my youth was atoned for in every outward circumstance; up to this hour

I have had to suffer—but now I have had enough of atonement—I demand my right."

He kissed me—then threw his cloak round me. "You will find some changes, my child, on your return," he said, after a pause, in a low voice. "The room on the ground-floor of the Swiss cottage is empty once more. • The bird of passage has flown once more to the South."

"But she was poor—what will she do?" I said, alarmed.

"That is all settled . . . she is your aunt, Lenore."

"And Charlotte?"

"She has received a terrible lesson; but I was not deceived in her—there is, in spite of all, a germ of real good in her. At first she was dreadfully shaken both in mind and body; but she has collected herself again, and now the true pride and real dignity of her mind is breaking forth. She is ashamed of her way of going on at school. She learned little or nothing, notwithstanding her talents and the ample means offered her for their cultivation, because she always maintained she was born to something higher and did not need to work. Now she is going into an institution, to prepare herself for being a governess. I do not object to this

decision, because occupation will completely cure her; in other respects the Claudius house will continue to be her home. . . . Dagobert is to leave the service and go to America as a farmer. The brother and sister's delusion, with regard to their origin and the final disclosure about it, has got noised about town —who has talked of it, no one knows. Dagobert's position would, however, become an unpleasant one, so he is going voluntarily. . . . Only a few hours before I set out here I was with the Princess. . . .”

I hid my face in his breast. “Now the verdict is going to be pronounced on me,” I whispered.

“Yes, now I know all,” he admitted, assuming a severe tone. “The Haideprinzesschen poked her wise little nose into the secret of the Carolinenlust the very first day of her arrival, and then assisted bravely in the intrigue against the unfortunate man in the Vorderhaus.”

“And he won't forgive me?”

He looked down at me and laughed. “Would he then have kissed the little red lips that can keep such heroic silence?”

We emerged from the the shelter of the hill—the storm attacked us.

"O, wert thou in the cauld blast"

I began to sing in the very teeth of the elements. It had become a reality; protected by his strong arm, by his side, and sheltered beneath the "plaidie" he had thrown around me, I walked along . . . and the storm passed by me with its spring breath, and whispered, "caught," caught." And I laughed aloud, and clung closer to him who guided me. Winds and bees and butterflies might fly henceforth in freedom o'er the Haide—I should do so no more....

Ilse was sitting in the fleet, peeling potatoes; Heinz had just come in from the orchard with the objectionable pipe as we entered the barn-door. . . . Never had I seen my faithful nurse so utterly confounded as when Herr Claudius threw back the cloak from my head and I looked out, laughing. The knife and the half-peeled potatoe fell from her hands, fell from her lap. "Herr Claudius!" she exclaimed in astonishment. At that name, Heinz took his pipe out of his mouth and held it behind his back.

"Good evening, Frau Ilse," said Herr Claudius. "You have been harbouring a little deserter here; I have come to take her back—she is *mine*."

"Frau Ilse" now began to understand. She

sprang up; knives, skins, potatoes, everything rolled on the flags. "Oh, so *that* was the illness!" She clapped her hands. "Elder-flower tea then was *not* then the very best cure! Nicely you imposed upon me, Lenore. And you intend to marry the child, Herr Claudius?" she said, while tears of emotion ran down her cheeks. "Only look at the tiny hands and face, and the young, young eyes—"

Herr Claudius blushed like a girl. "She is satisfied with me, she is, my youthful Lenore!" he said gently and with some hesitation. "She maintains that she loves the old, dead old man."

I clung to him still closer.

"Oh, that was not what I meant, Herr Claudius," Ilse protested energetically. "I'd like to see the being who wouldn't say 'Yes and Amen' too gladly, but, but, the number of people in your service, how can they look on such a tiny creature with respect?—a creature you could carry about the house in your arms like a child."

He laughed softly. "She will gain their respect when they see how she governs the head of the house . . . and now, Frau Ilse, prepare yourself: to-morrow we set out—the intended bride must return home in your company."

Ilse put her apron to her eyes. "But the Dierkhof meantime, Herr Claudius? If you only knew how I found it before on my return," she said, somewhat sharply.

Heinz scratched his ear and looked shyly at his stern sister. "But I flew towards him and put my arm in his; "Heinz, naughty Heinz, why don't you congratulate me?"

"Oh yes, Prinzesschen; but I am sorry too; there yonder it's after all—no Haide."

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I began this narrative two years after my wedding day. The cradle stood near my writing-table and a tiny being lay among the pillows—my beautiful, fair, first-born. It was for this tiny miracle, which I gaze at with ever new amazement, that I began to write my experiences. . . . Since then, a splendid *brown-haired* fellow with a powerful infant voice has taken his place in the green-veiled basket, and now Lenore, the only daughter of the house of Claudius, is slumbering in the same spot. . . . I have been seven years married. I am seated in the room that formerly belonged to Charlotte. The dark curtains have vanished—it is sunny around me; bouquets

of roses, embroidered and painted, are scattered everywhere, on carpets, curtains and walls, and the window-sills are perfect masses of flowers. Lenore is asleep, her tiny fist pressed against her cheek—it is so still, I can hear a fly buzz—so I close at last!

The door opens all at once, and there they come, the two scions of the house of Claudius.

“But, mamma, you are writing *too* long,” cries out the fair-haired one reproachfully. “We want to eat sour milk in the garden.—Aunt Fliedner is in the bower already, and we have fetched grand-papa too.”

I see the tremulous delight in his face—he is shooting up rapidly; but, oh—how will it be about the authority, when once he has shot up above his tiny mother’s head? . . . The little brown fellow, however, raises himself on his tip-toes, lays a cord as thick as my finger and a stout willow right across my manuscript, and begs in his deep, honest voice: “Mamma, make me a whip!”

“Go meanwhile to the garden,” I say, while I laboured to put together the almost impossible whip. “I havet first write something to aunt Charlotte.”

“From Paul too!” On my assenting they both ran off again downstairs.

The very day of my return from the Haide, Charlotte left the Claudius house to enter a school; and a short time after young Helldorf went to England—he had asked for Charlotte's hand and been refused. She confessed to me in writing, that she had treated him *too* badly, in her arrogance, and now that she had fallen from her imaginary height, she would still less yield to her inclination. We did not allow her take any situation when once she had finished her studies. At our request, she returned to the Claudius house—a passionately loving aunt to our children. Helldorf's name never crossed her lips, although she, as well as we all, had much intercourse with his brother's family. Then came the war of '66. Max Helldorf was called out and severely wounded at Königgrätz. . . . An hour after his brother looking pale as death had brought the intelligence to our house, Charlotte came into my room, dressed in travelling costume. "I am going as a deaconess, Lenore," she said, decidedly. "Tell uncle my intention,—I cannot do otherwise."

Claudius was away. I let her go with delight. Four weeks later she wrote us a long, happy letter, signed "Charlotte Helldorf." The field-chaplain had united the patient and his faithful nurse. . . . The youthful pair are now living at Dorotheenthal,

and since "little Paul" opened his great eyes, Charlotte cannot imagine why mankind, who all enter life on the same footing, should trouble themselves by entering into disputes arising only from pride or wrong feeling. . . .

Ah, now I hear a firm tread on the stairs. . . . I write on and pretend I don't hear him coming—the man who spoils me more than he can answer for. I always laugh at him, when he takes me up in his arms and calls out to my father, "She is the oldest and least sensible of my children." And my father nods with his absent smile—he is still very absent, my good papa! but he is tenderly cared for by us, and his latest work has made a furore in the world of learning. Perhaps his grandchildren have had a hand in that—they are allowed to rummage about in the now restored library as much as they please, to climb upon his knees even, while he is writing. His position at Court is pleasanter than ever and the Princess often visits at our house; but a thick curtain hangs over Lothar's portrait and the little door in the Carolinenlust is built up. . . .

The tall, still slight man has just entered and is bending over the cradle, examining his little daughter. . . .

"It is extraordinary how like you that child is, Lenore!"

I spring up proudly; for he says it with an enchanted gaze. . . . Away with the pen and the manuscript! You have no colours to paint the sunshine of joy on the forehead of the ~~Haide-~~prinzesschen."

THE END.

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